

AD-A258 525



2

WHY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE LAUNCHED A MAJOR
MILITARY OFFENSIVE DURING TET 1968

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirement of the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

M. K. LIETZ, MAJ, USA
B.A., Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington,
1978

DTIC
ELECTE
DEC 30 1992
S A D

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
1992

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

92 12 23 141

92-32783



REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE 5 Jun 92	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis 1 August 1991-5June	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Why did the North Vietnamese conduct an offensive during Tet 1968?			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Major Marilyn K. Lietz, USA				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Attn: ATZL-SWD-GD Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) This study examines the reasons why the North Vietnamese launched a general offensive during the Tet holiday of 1968. Based on events of the previous year, conditions did not appear favorable for the North Vietnamese to undertake such a massive and risky operation. Several reasons accounted for this decision; political pressure from Russia and China for a resolution to the war, military failure to achieve victory through the <u>use of</u> the dau tranh strategy of war, and in creasing inability of the Vietnamese people - North and South - to provide economic and social support for the war, and impatience on the part of the North Vietnamese leaders. North Vietnam's goal was to hasten the resolution of the war by a massive offensive and to quickly bring the United States and South Vietnam to the negotiating table. By prematurely launching this offensive, the North Vietnamese did not comply with the dau tranh model strategy of revolutionary war.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Vietnam, North Vietnamese, Giap, Ho Chi Minh, dau tranh, revolutionary war,			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 228	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	

WHY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE LAUNCHED A MAJOR
MILITARY OFFENSIVE DURING TET 1968

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirement of the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by


M. K. LIETZ, MAJ, USA
B.A., Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington,
1978

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
1992

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Title of thesis: Why the North Vietnamese Launched a Major Military Offensive During Tet 1968

Approved by: 

COL V. Paul Baerman, M.A.

Ragh K. Bodden

MAJ Ralph K. Bodenner, B.A.

7331

MAJ Leon B. Baker, M.A.

Robert W Duffner

COL Robert W. Duffner, Ph.D.

Philip I. Brooker

Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

Accession For	
NTIS GRA&I	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification	
By	
Distribution /	
Availability Code	
Dist	Availability / or Special

of A-1

ABSTRACT

WHY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE LAUNCHED A MAJOR MILITARY OFFENSIVE DURING TET 1968 by MAJ M.K. Lietz, USA, 228 pages.

This study examines the reasons why the North Vietnamese launched a general offensive during the Tet holiday of 1968. Based on events of the previous year, conditions did not appear favorable for the North Vietnamese to undertake such a massive and risky operation. Several reasons accounted for this decision; political pressure from Russia and China for a resolution to the war, military failure to achieve victory through the use of the dau tranh strategy of war, the increasing inability of the Vietnamese people - North and South - to provide economic and social support for the war, and impatience on the part of the North Vietnamese leaders. North Vietnam's goal was to hasten the resolution of the war by a massive offensive and to quickly bring the United States and South Vietnam to the negotiating table. By prematurely launching this offensive, the North Vietnamese did not comply with the dau tranh model strategy of revolutionary war.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I extend my gratitude to Colonel V. Paul Baerman, Committee Chairman, to Colonel Robert W. Duffner, Consulting Faculty Member, and to Lieutenant Colonel Ralph K. Bodenner and Major Butch B. Baker, both members of my committee, without whose generous guidance I could not have completed this thesis. I also wish to thank my Mom and Dad for wholeheartedly supporting my endeavors for the past 36 years.

M. K. L.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE.	ii
ABSTRACT.	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES AND CHARTS.	viii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	
Purpose of this Thesis.	1
Context of the Problem.	1
Assumptions	30
Definitions	30
Research Methodology.	42
Limitations	45
Organization.	46
Significance of this Study.	47
2. MAO TSE TUNG'S THEORY OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND THE VIETNAMESE STRATEGY OF DAU TRANH	
Introduction.	48
The Framework of Dau Tranh.	51
The Differences Between Mao's Strategy and Dau Tranh	59
Political Struggle - Dau Tranh Chinh Tri	63
Transitioning in Dau Tranh.	68
A Historical Example.	70
Summary	77
3. POLITICAL ISSUES	
Introduction.	78
The Political Situation in the Soviet Union and China.	79
United States Political Issues.	88
South Vietnam's Political Issues.	94
North Vietnam's Political Issues.	97
Peace Negotiations.	99
The Political Decision to Transition.	103
Summary	106
4. MILITARY ISSUES	
Introduction.	108
Military Operations	109
Military Statistics - Early 1967.	112

The Threat of More U.S. and Allied Soldiers	114
Military Operations - 1967.	117
1967 Year-End Statistics.	120
Effects of Pacification Programs.	124
Dau Tranh Phasing Debate.	127
The Decision of the Thirteenth Plenum.	130
Giap Targets Pacification Efforts	132
Summary	133
5. ECONOMIC ISSUES	
Introduction.	135
United States Economic Issues	136
South Vietnam's Economic Issues	139
North Vietnam's Economic Issues	142
Loss of South Vietnamese Support for the VC.	143
Loss of Transportation Assets	151
Manpower Shortage	153
Loss of Industrial Base	159
Economic Support for the Offensive.	162
Summary	164
6. SOCIAL ISSUES	
Introduction.	166
Social Issues Within the United States	167
Social Issues Within South Vietnam.	172
Social Issues Within North Vietnam.	173
Support of Other Nations.	174
Loss of Support in South Vietnam	176
Lies to Leadership Concerning Political Struggle	182
Summary	188
7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	
Introduction.	190
Why Transition to a General Offensive	191
Political Reasons	191
Military Reasons.	193
Economic Reasons.	194
Social Reasons.	194
Was This Transition Correct Using the Dau Tranh Model	195
Conclusion.	199

Appendix

1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.	201
2. ACRONYMS.	210
BIBLIOGRAPHY	212
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST.	228

LIST OF FIGURES AND CHARTS

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Organization of the Lao Dong Party	24
Figure 2: Typical Inter-Province Organization of the Vietcong	25
Figure 3: The Dau Tranh Strategy of Revolutionary War.	53
Figure 4: Map of South Vietnam	110
Chart 1: Defense Spending vs "The Great Society". . .	137
Chart 2: The Budget Dollar 1967	138
Chart 3: Support for the War.	168

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

We make war in the Vietnamese manner. . . .
A Soviet Marshal once asked me how I defeated the Americans. He asked me how many infantry divisions, tank divisions, artillery divisions we had. How much aviation [laughter]. If we had fought like that, we would have been beaten in less than two hours, but we fought differently and we won.¹

Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, 1990

Purpose

This research paper will explain why the North Vietnamese thought January 1968 was the correct time to launch a major offensive. It will also analyze why that decision was an incorrect one based on the protracted war model of Mao Tse-Tung, as applied to the more specific Vietnamese strategy for revolutionary war.

Context of the Problem

It is widely thought the North Vietnamese offensive of Tet 1968 was the turning point in the Vietnam war. In

¹Howard R. Simpson, "A Conversation with Gen. Giap." Army Magazine. (September 1991), 48.

order to understand why this offensive occurred when it did, the reader requires some background of Vietnam and its leaders.

Prior to the United States intervention in the 1960s, Vietnam had struggled against outside aggression for over two thousand years. In the mid-nineteenth century the French began a policy to colonize Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos into "French Indochina." Since the 1920s there were groups of communists and nationalists in Indochina who opposed the French.² Both groups wanted to control the country, but above all, they wanted Vietnam ruled by Vietnamese people, not colonialists.

In an interview with a western journalist in 1990, Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap discussed why the Vietnamese people turned to communism during the French occupation. Giap, a revolutionist since 1926 and one of the key developers of the Vietnamese strategy for revolutionary war, believed development of an organized communist party resulted from French repression.³ He explained, "In 1930, the global depression had hit Vietnam, and peasant unrest

²Douglas Pike, PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam (Novato: Presidio Press, 1986), 15.

³Philip B. Davidson, Vietnam at War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.

spread through the country, spurring radicals to rebel against the French, who summarily executed hundreds in reprisal."⁴

According to the French Supreme Command, Far East's "Lessons learned from the Indochina War, Volume II," the French also pinpointed the beginning of the communist insurgency in Vietnam as response to their forceful military actions against the depression-caused peasant unrest in North-Annam (northern part of what is now South Vietnam) and in the Tonkin Delta area (North Vietnam) in 1930. For example, a village shelled by the French in retaliation for peasant unrest remained a "hotbed" of peasant revolt.⁵

According to Douglas Pike, author and noted expert on the Vietnamese army and culture, the French reprisal was a result of the communist movement replacing the officials in sixteen villages with communist leaders. The communists planned to use these leaders as the nucleus for revolution. The 1930 peasant uprisings in Annam's Nghe An and Ha Tin provinces spread to revolts and, for a brief time, were national in scale. The French swiftly retaliated and through systematic, direct military action, removed the

⁴"Giap Remembers," The New York Times Magazine (24 June 1990): 36.

⁵French Supreme Command, Far East, "Lessons from the Indo-China war, Volume II." HQS Supreme Command, Far East, 6.

village communist leaders and put down the rebellion. In all, 10,000 Vietnamese were killed, 50,000 exiled, and 100,000 jailed by the French.⁶

In response to this French action, the Vietnamese officially formed the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) in October 1930. The party's policy summary was written in absentia by ICP leader Ho Chi Minh residing in Hong Kong.⁷ Ho Chi Minh, who would later become the leader of North Vietnam, stated the ICP's goal was to lead the national democratic revolution of the Vietnamese people against the imperialists and the feudal landlord class of French colonists in Vietnam.⁸

When the Japanese occupied Indochina in 1940, they left the French colonial administration intact, but controlled its actions.⁹ This gave the Japanese control of the country without having to deal with the political infrastructure and also caused the Vietnamese to partly blame the French for the Japanese repression that followed. In 1941, Ho Chi Minh, leader of the ICP, returned to Vietnam after

⁶Timothy J. Lomperis, The War Everyone Lost - and Won (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 30.

⁷Bernard Fall, Last Reflections on a War, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 77.

⁸Vo Nguyen Giap, People's War, People's Army (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 26.

⁹Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 140.

thirty years of traveling around the world, to the United States, China, Hong Kong, the Soviet Union, and various countries within Europe.¹⁰

As discussed by Thomas Latimer in his doctorate thesis on "Hanoi's Leaders and their South Vietnam Policies," Ho was exposed to many different cultures through his travels. He started his wanderings as a mess boy aboard a French freighter in 1911. During his thirty years roaming outside Vietnam, he traveled for the Communist party as a revolutionist, serving everywhere the party needed an experienced and able revolutionary, gaining political but not military experience.¹¹ Ho joined the French Communist party in 1920 and throughout the 1920s, he traveled from Brooklyn, New York, to London, Paris, Moscow and Canton.¹² Ho wrote and lectured avidly on his major ideological theory-that anti-colonial nationalism and socioeconomic revolution were inseparable.¹³ Throughout the 1930s, Ho

¹⁰Ibid., 118-127.

¹¹Thomas Kennedy Latimer, Hanoi's Leaders and their South Vietnam Policies: 1954-1968 (Washington DC: Georgetown University, 1972), 20-21

¹²Denis Warner, The Last Confucian (New York: Macmillian Company, 1963), 25.

¹³Most of Ho's writings are contained in a collection edited by Bernard Fall, entitled On Revolution. This work covers over eighty articles, poems, speeches, and letters written between 1920 and 1966.

spent time in China, the Soviet Union, Thailand, and Asia.¹⁴ Ho's experiences in these different cultures taught him about using the united front tactic of getting many different factions to work together toward a common goal.¹⁵

Ho and his Indochinese Communist Party were determined to expel the French and Japanese forces that occupied Vietnam. After France fell to Germany on the European continent during World War II in June 1940, Ho Chi Minh began to discuss strategy within the ICP. He felt political action should have primacy in the revolution process. Remembering the disastrous results of direct political action taken by the ICP during the 1930 depression, Ho still wanted to resolve differences with political action before trying to force the issue with military action. He knew his military arm of power, under the leadership of Giap, was still not strong enough to overthrow the Japanese military in Vietnam. Its arms and ammunition were outdated. Some were captured from the French, others from Chaing Kai-shek's army of China. Therefore, his strategy was "political action should precede military action."¹⁶

¹⁴James S. Olson, ed., Dictionary of the Vietnam War (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 202.

¹⁵Ibid., 21.

¹⁶"Giap Remembers," NYTimes Magazine: 52.

However, in February 1941 after Ho returned to Vietnam from China, he made plans to conduct armed military struggle against the French and Japanese occupation forces. During the Indochinese Communist Party's Eighth Plenum (general assembly) held in Kwangsi, China, in May 1941, the ICP officially decided that armed "dau tranh" (struggle) would be conducted through a united front.¹⁷

The united front, a Leninist concept, was an organized coalition of the three different communist groups within Vietnam, the Indo-China Communist Party, the Annamite Communist Party, and the Revolutionary Youth Movement, and several groups of nationalists dedicated to ousting the Japanese and French.¹⁸ The most noteworthy of these groups of nationalists was the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, created and assisted by Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalists. These associations gave a greater legitimacy to the united front by showing that its membership was open to all groups of people, not just communists.¹⁹

This front, formed on 1 May 1941, was called the Vietnamese Doc Lap Dong Minh (Front of the Allies for the Independence of Vietnam) or the Vietminh, as it became known

¹⁷Pike, PAVN, 24.

¹⁸Warner, Confucian, 26.

¹⁹Ho Chin Minh, On Revolution (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 142.

colloquially.²⁰ Using his political savvy, Ho Chi Minh appointed non-communist Ho Ngoc Lam as chairman of this front, hoping to further encourage the support of non-communist party elements within Vietnam.²¹

In the summer of 1941, Ho sent Vo Nguyen Giap, a trusted disciple of the cause and his main source of military expertise, into the rural regions of Vietnam recruiting peasants for membership in the communist party. Giap was assigned by Ho to lead the military arm of the Vietminh's struggle against the Japanese and French.

Previously Giap spent two years with the Chinese Nationalists in China studying armed struggle and kept copious notes of this training. He relied on the advice of Chinese Nationalist advisors, his notes, and his own thoughts, to develop small cells of communists.²² Under Giap's organizational management and as the French repressive actions further degraded the quality of life of the Vietnamese, the initially established cells of five members multiplied swiftly. These small cells were organized to provide a foundation for spreading the word of communism throughout the country and to recruit more

²⁰Allan W. Cameron, ed., Viet-Nam Crisis: A Documentary History, Volume 1, 1940-1956 (New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 7.

²¹Ibid., 25.

²²To view a modern treatment of the development of communist cells, see Jeffrey Race's book War Comes to Long An (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972)

members. Each cell was autonomous for security reasons. The political cadres of the ICP, seeing a need for security for the developing movement, established guerrilla bands within Vietnam that were also placed under the leadership of Giap in 1941.²³

On 9 March 1945 the Japanese disarmed and interned the French military forces and assumed all governing powers of Vietnam because of a fear of an allied invasion. On 10 March, the Japanese ambassador informed Emperor Bao Dai that Vietnam was now an "independent" state. Bao Dai proclaimed this independence on 11 March 1945. Ho, as well as General de Gaulle of France, expected the allies to assist in recovering Vietnam colony for France. Therefore, Ho decided to wait for better conditions for his takeover.²⁴

Ho Chi Minh's concern with proper timing of military action was evident in his address to the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party on 12 March 1945. Ho stated "Conditions are not yet ripe for an uprising. The political crisis is acute but the conditions are not yet ripe for an uprising. . . ." Ho felt the population was still in a euphoric mood due to the proclamation of independence and therefore were not ready to provide the ICP military forces with the popular uprising necessary to

²³Ho Chi Minh, On Revolution, 27.

²⁴Cameron, ed., Crisis, 24.

defeat the Japanese forces.²⁵ To develop this support, Ho advocated change in the focus of the actions being taken to incite the people to rise up against the Japanese, such as more propaganda. Ho also felt the local forces were not ready for such an undertaking. He agreed to work with the French for the common goal of ousting the Japanese, however he never gave up the ultimate goal of independence for Vietnam. In addition, Ho called for general strikes in workshops and markets, sabotage, and armed demonstrations and guerrilla activity. Ho asked for patience and the Central Committee agreed to wait until the time was right, "for example, when the Japanese Army surrenders to the allies or when the allies are decisively engaged in Indochina."²⁶

By August 1945 the situation had changed in favor of the Vietnamese. The Japanese were concerned with rumors that the French, along with a United State force, were preparing a military invasion into French Indochina to attack the Japanese, rumors no doubt assisted by the Viet-minh's propaganda campaign. The Vietnamese population had

²⁵David G. Marr, Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 408.

²⁶"Nhat Phap danh nhau va hanh dong cua ta," [The Franco-Japanese Fight and our Actions]. Reprinted in Cmcd-11, pp13-23, as quoted in Vietnamese Tradition on Trial.

grown more militant from the oppressive Japanese treatment. In the rural areas especially, the people were attacking Japanese outposts, police posts, and soldiers.

This militant action was caused in great part by the famine Vietnam experienced in the summer of 1945. Because the Japanese troops insisted the Vietnamese grow industrial crops like peanuts and jute instead of rice, heavy rains, poorly maintained dikes and the requisitioning of rice by the Japanese against the rumored United States invasion, there was not enough rice to feed the population. Northern Vietnam, which habitually endured a food shortage, even during normal years, suffered the worst. Out of the estimated 10 million population, two million starved to death during this famine. In August, as news of Japan's surrender to the United States spread, more and more local uprisings and protests occurred.²⁷

When Ho learned of the capitulation of the Japanese on 16 August 1945, he called sixty Vietminh comrades to Tran Tao, a village north of Hanoi and ordered them to use the turmoil caused by the surrender to incite the Vietnamese people to rise up against the Japanese administration. Acting in synchronization with this communist incited uprising, the Vietnamese forces succeeded in ousting the Japanese in what the Vietnamese called the "August Revolution," which occurred between 16 and 25 August.

²⁷Karnow, History, 144-145.

Bewildered by the news their country had surrendered to the United States, the Japanese did not strongly resist this almost bloodless revolution.²⁸

After Japan recognized Vietnam on 16 August 1945, the Vietminh swiftly reacted to fill the void in leadership created by the Japanese defeat. Vietminh detachments marched into Hanoi and took over public buildings. Because the French puppet emperor, Bao Dai, was out on a hunting trip at the time of the revolt, the emperor's delegate resigned to a Vietminh-run committee of citizens. On 23 August Ho Chi Minh arrived in Hanoi from Tran Tao and proclaimed independence for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Ho also declared General Giap as commander of all Vietminh armed forces.²⁹

The emperor, conceding the country to the communists, officially relinquished the trappings of his power, the royal seal and sword, to Ho Chi Minh's delegation in Hue on August 25. Ho, a true politician who wanted to gain the maximum support from all the people of Vietnam, made Bao Dai the "supreme advisor" for the new government.³⁰

²⁸Philip B. Davidson, Vietnam at War: The History, 1946-1975, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 24.

²⁹Karnow, History, 146.

³⁰Ibid., 146.

Truong Chinh, one of Ho's closest advisors and chief Marxist theorist,³¹ made the revolution seem like a great military victory, as well as a political victory. In this passage, quoted from Truong Chinh's, Primer for Revolt, note the emphasis he placed on correct timing by waiting for the United States to militarily defeat the main Japanese forces, leaving the Japanese forces occupying Vietnam in a confused and disoriented state.

The leaders of the August Revolution had 'well chosen the moment for the decisive blow, the moment for starting the insurrection, so timed as to coincide with the moment when the crisis has reached its climax, when it is fully apparent that the vanguard is prepared to fight to the end, the reserves are prepared to support the vanguard, and maximum consternation reigns in the ranks of the enemy.'³²

Meanwhile, the international community prepared to execute the terms of Japan's surrender. As a minor part of the World War II peace accords, the Allies divided up Vietnam into zones of control to disarm the Japanese. The British were assigned responsibility for this action in the South and the Chinese in the north. The British allowed the French to return to Vietnam and released the French soldiers in Vietnam who had been interned by the Japanese forces. Still suffering from the famine, the influx of Chinese troops into Northern Vietnam and the French and British into

³¹Olson, ed., Dictionary, 458.

³²Truong Chinh, Primer for Revolt (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 32.

the south, exasperated the shortage of food and aided the communists in generating support for their cause.³³

In the northern part of Vietnam, the communist movement was forced to go underground due to a political agreement in which Ho agreed to disband the Indochinese Communist party in return for a coalition government made up of Vietminh and the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang. On 23 September 1945, French troops conducted a coup d'etat in Saigon and two days later, the first American military officer, LTC A. Peter Dewey, was killed by Vietnamese forces who mistook him for a Frenchman. Dewey was also the son of a former member of the US Congress and nephew of Thomas E. Dewey, Governor of New York, and Republican nominee for President in 1948. In his eulogy in the House of Representatives on 1 October 1945, Representative Harold Knutson said the shot that killed Dewey,

. . . may, in a sense, be another shot 'heard round the world' in awakening the American people to the necessity of deciding how far we as a Nation are going to support with military forces the colonial policies of other nations. If the death of valiant Peter Dewey may result in saving the lives of many other American boys, his sacrifice may not have been in vain.³⁴

It wasn't until 1949 that the United States Congress approved legislation to send noncombatant military advisors

³³Bui Diem, The Jaws of History (Boston: Houghton Mufflin Co, 1990), 39-40.

³⁴"Congressional Record, vol 91," (Washington D.C.: US Govt. Printing Office, 1945), 9156, as quoted by William Conrad Gibbons, The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 3.

into Vietnam.³⁵ In order to maintain a presence in the area, and to provide advice, assistance, and aid to the Vietnamese who were assisting in the battle against the communists, the United States established a U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) in February 1950. By 1953 this group totaled some three hundred troops.³⁶

From September 1945 until March 1946, Ho attempted to persuade the United States Government to assist in the political negotiations for Vietnamese self-rule, but to no avail.³⁷ By the winter of 1945, after minor battles between Ho's followers and the French, most cities and major towns in the south were again controlled by the French while the poorly armed and militarily weak communists took refuge in the countryside.³⁸ Ho's party, after fierce debate, agreed that the French left-wing government would probably give independence to Vietnam eventually and in the meantime could provide it with vital economic and administrative assistance. During this debate Ho argued for the French assistance vice the Chinese because of Ho's distrust of China's promise not to take over Vietnam. Ho's words were,

³⁵"Public Law 81-329, sec 406(b)," as described in Gibbons, U.S. Government, 61.

³⁶U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 14 January 1965), 2-9.

³⁷Gibbons, U.S. Government, 23.

³⁸Ibid., 43.

as reported by Bernard Fall in Last Reflections on a War,

Don't you realize what it means if the Chinese stay? Don't you remember our history? The last time the Chinese came, they stayed one thousand years!

The French are foreigners. They are weak. Colonialism is dying out. Nothing will be able to withstand world pressure for independence. They may stay for a while, but they will have to go because the white man is finished in Asia. But if the Chinese stay now, they will never leave.

As for me, I prefer to smell French shit for five years, rather than Chinese shit for the rest of my life.³⁹

With this logic, Ho signed an agreement with the French in early 1946 allowing them to stay for five years with France recognizing the DRVN as a "Free State within the French Union."⁴⁰ The leaders of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam continued to negotiate for complete independence, and from 6 July to 10 September 1946 participated in the Fontainebleau Conference where the French refused to grant that wish.⁴¹ However Ho was able to gain acceptance for recognition of the boundary for the "Free State within the French Union" to be just south of the 16th Parallel and as a consequence, on September 14th, an agreement was signed to that effect.⁴²

³⁹Fall, Last Reflections, 27.

⁴⁰Ibid., 85-86.

⁴¹R.B. Smith, An International History of the Vietnam War, Volume I, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 52.

⁴²Vincent J. Goulding, Jr., "War Since 1945 Seminar: Dien Bien Phu." (Quantico, Virginia: US Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1985), 12.

On 20 November 1946, fighting broke out between French troops and Vietnamese militia in the port of Haiphong over a customs disagreement. Overreaction by the French commander, Colonel Debes, caused the death of about 6,000 Vietnamese, both civilians and soldiers. As the French continued to march on Haiphong, Ho tried to resolve this problem with diplomatic requests to the French government in Paris. His appeals for peace fell on deaf ears.⁴³ On 19 December, resigned to fighting, the Vietminh struck against French garrisons from south of Saigon to the Chinese border.⁴⁴ Thus began the First Indochina War.

After eight years of fighting and after the loss of over 94,000 French and colonial troops,⁴⁵ the French suffered a final military defeat on 7 May 1954, one day before the scheduled peace conference was to begin in Geneva. General Vo Nguyen Giap had conducted a successful siege and battle at Dien Bien Phu, a French military stronghold west of Hanoi in northern Vietnam.⁴⁶

The timing for this battle and subsequent victory, in light of the conference, was another example of the Vietnamese ability to recognize the importance of synchron-

⁴³Ibid., 13.

⁴⁴Fall, Last Reflections, 86.

⁴⁵Bernard Fall, Street Without Joy, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1961), 313

⁴⁶Karnow, History, 197-198.

ronizing the execution of political and military operations. The Vietnamese conducted the massive Dien Bien Phu offensive operation in order to be able to negotiate from a position of military strength during the Geneva Peace Conference.⁴⁷

At the peace conference, the French conceded they could not sustain the fight any longer, due not only to the heavy military losses sustained but also because of political considerations. These included knowing the United States and Great Britain would not support the French militarily, economically or politically due to the rejection of such action by the United States Congress and the House of Commons. In the United States this response was in part due to the questions raised during LTC Dewey's eulogy on the legitimacy of perpetuating colonialism.⁴⁸ France was also concerned about the instability threatening their colony in Algeria and the possibility of more aid coming from China to Vietnam now that the Korean war had ended.⁴⁹

The French also realized public opinion of the population in France strongly opposed continuation of the war. This was demonstrated by the replacement of Prime Minister Laniel of France in June 1954 due to his inability

⁴⁷Ibid., 198.

⁴⁸Fall, Last Reflections, 140.

⁴⁹Bruce Palmer, 25-Year War (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1984), 6.

to produce results at the peace conference table, after rejecting all peace offers of Pham Van Dong, chief of the DRV delegation.⁵⁰

At the same time as Laniel's replacement by Prime Minister Mendes-France in Paris, a take-charge attitude emerged from the Communist Chinese delegation at the Geneva peace conference led by Zhou Enlai. This was greatly disconcerting to the French delegation.⁵¹ Due largely to pressure from the Russians but more from the Chinese, who had provided technical expertise and advanced weapons (some of which had been captured from the American's in Korea) and were not willing to participate in a prolonged war, it soon became evident the DRV was unable to transform their battlefield victory into a full diplomatic victory.⁵²

It was under this pressure that Pham Van Dong, the chief of the DRV delegation, accepted division of the country at the seventeenth parallel instead of Pham's originally proposed thirteenth.⁵³ The permanency of this division would be decided at a nationwide election. The DRV government (communists) who controlled the north, and the State of Vietnam (created by the Ha Long Bay Agreement

⁵⁰Karnow, History, 200.

⁵¹Ibid., 199-204.

⁵²Smith, International, 60.

⁵³It should be remembered the Vietminh had been granted control of the northern part of Vietnam to just below the sixteenth parallel in agreement with the French in 1946.

between the French and Bao Dai in 1946),⁵⁴ who controlled the area south of the seventeenth parallel, promised to hold this election in 1956, eighteen months after the DRV proposed date.⁵⁵

Because Zhou Enlai seemed more concerned in keeping Vietnam weak militarily and politically than in allowing the nation to reunify, Pham Van Dong felt Vietnam was tossed to the wolves. The DRV and their soldiers, the Vietminh, had lost ground gained in combat at the cost of blood. As Pham Van Dong related some twenty years later, "We were betrayed." General Giap, a man who also harbored deep resentment toward the Chinese's duplicity in the negotiations, also wanted to press the military fight. Giap stated, "We could have gained more."⁵⁶

Appointed by Bao Dai as prime minister of the southern portion of Vietnam, anti-French and anti-communist Ngo Din Diem soon reneged on the promise of nationwide elections, because he felt that he would lose the elections to the communist party led by Ho Chi Minh. He declared South Vietnam as the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in 1955.⁵⁷ In order to quell pro-election revolts within South Vietnam by the people who wanted to see their country reunited, Ngo

⁵⁴Smith, International, 52.

⁵⁵Karnow, History, 202-204.

⁵⁶"Giap Remembers," The NYTimes Magazine: 22.

⁵⁷Smith, International, 52.

ordered the arrest and consequent execution of thousands of southern Vietminh militants, many without trial.⁵⁸

The communist regime in Hanoi did not immediately react to these executions and the failure for Bao Dai to make good on his promise for a nationwide election with military force. Vo Nguyen Giap stated that, "Perhaps we should have acted sooner . . . but our people were tired after a long war, and they might not have responded to a call for yet another armed struggle. We would wait."⁵⁹ As seen before in the 1940s and early 1950s, Ho hoped to be able to use political action to resolve this issue before being forced into more military action.

The communist emphasis on political action was evidenced by the "party-inspired mass demonstrations extolling the 'victory at Geneva'." Ho had been confident that when the elections occurred, the communists would win. When the elections did not occur, Ho felt Diem would not be able to establish a central government and the communists could move in to the power vacuum, much like they did against the Japanese in 1945.⁶⁰ By May 1959, after watching Diem succeed in forming a government in the south,

⁵⁸Dave Richard Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet (Novato: Presidio Press, 1978), 7.

⁵⁹"Giap Remembers," The NYTimes Magazine: 22.

⁶⁰Eric Bergerud, The Dynamics of Defeat: The Vietnam War in Hau Nghia Province (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1991), 14.

Ho realized that his party could not gain control by political means. Therefore, during that month at the Fifteenth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party, Ho Chi Minh and his Politburo decided to invade South Vietnam with regular NVA troops.⁶¹

To avoid provoking the United States, staunch ally of Diem's strongly anti-communist government, regular North Vietnamese soldiers started infiltrating south to join up with the small cells of communists in South Vietnam. In December 1960, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV) or the NLF (as known by the Western press) and its military arm, the People's Liberation Armed Force (PLAF) was established in South Vietnam. The hierarchy of control went from the Central Committee of the Dang Lao Dong party in Hanoi to the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) and down to the NLF and PLAF.⁶² Assisted by in-place cadre members, and reminiscent of the formation of the Vietminh, the NLF intended to provide control of the communist movement in the South without visibly (to the world outside Vietnam) violating the Geneva agreement

⁶¹Lloyd J. Matthews and Dale E. Brown, eds., Assessing the Vietnam War (Washington D.C.:Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1987), Vietnam Diplomacy: Reflections of a Former Iron Curtain Official by Janos Radvanyi, 58.

⁶²"A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam," Vol VI, Conduct of the War, Book 1, Operational Analysis. (Contract Study, BDM Corporation, 1980), 3-8.

against sending forces (political or military) to the South.⁶³

This control was provided by a chain of command and control flowing from the Central Committee in Hanoi to the COSVN located in field locations throughout South Vietnam, to the three interzone areas, South Central, Saigon, and Nambo (northern portion of South Vietnam). Each zone was then further subdivided into interprovince areas, provinces and districts, and control ended at the town and village cells. In addition, each interzone committee consisted of specialized agencies: the Secretariat, Liaison, Propaganda, Personnel, Subversive Activities in the Army, Bases, Espionage, Military Affairs, Popular Fronts, and Finance. Nambo Interzone (northern most portion of South Vietnam) also had an Agency for the Democratic Party and Subversions among the Chinese. This is graphically represented by Chart 1 on page 24.⁶⁴

Chart 2, shown on page 25, provides a typical interzone organization chart for the Vietcong within South Vietnam. This organization was the same for all interzones and interprovinces. There were six interprovinces and each had five or more provinces to oversee. In all there were 43 provinces within South Vietnam. Each province had several

⁶³Pike, PAVN, 44.

⁶⁴U.S. Department of State, A Threat to Peace (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 8.

districts, and within each district were multiple towns, villages, or hamlets to be administered to provide support to the communist movement through economic support to include money and a recruiting base for soldiers.⁶⁵

LAO DONG PARTY Ho Chi Minh Secretary General

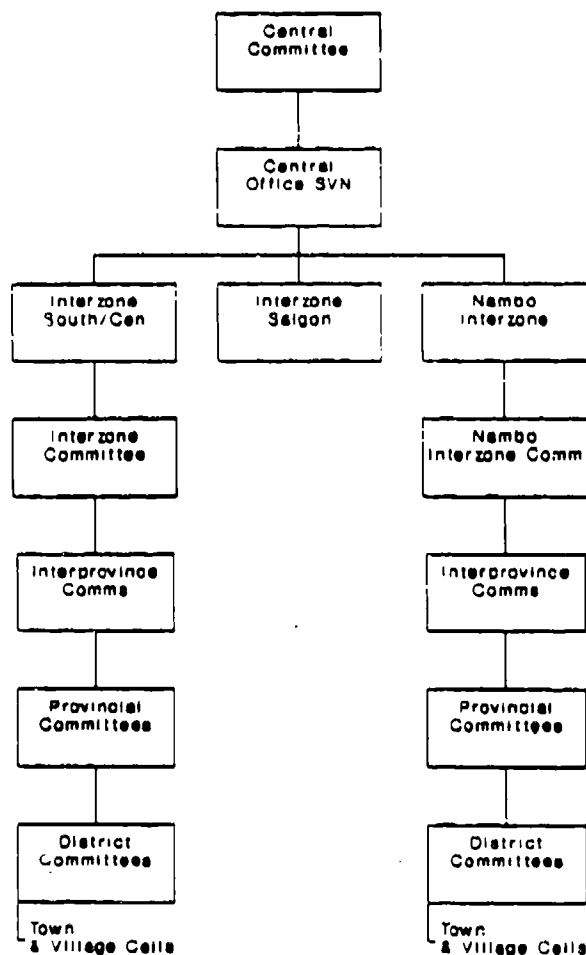


CHART 1: Organization of the Lao Dong Party

⁶⁵Ibid.

Typical Inter-Province Organization of the Vietcong

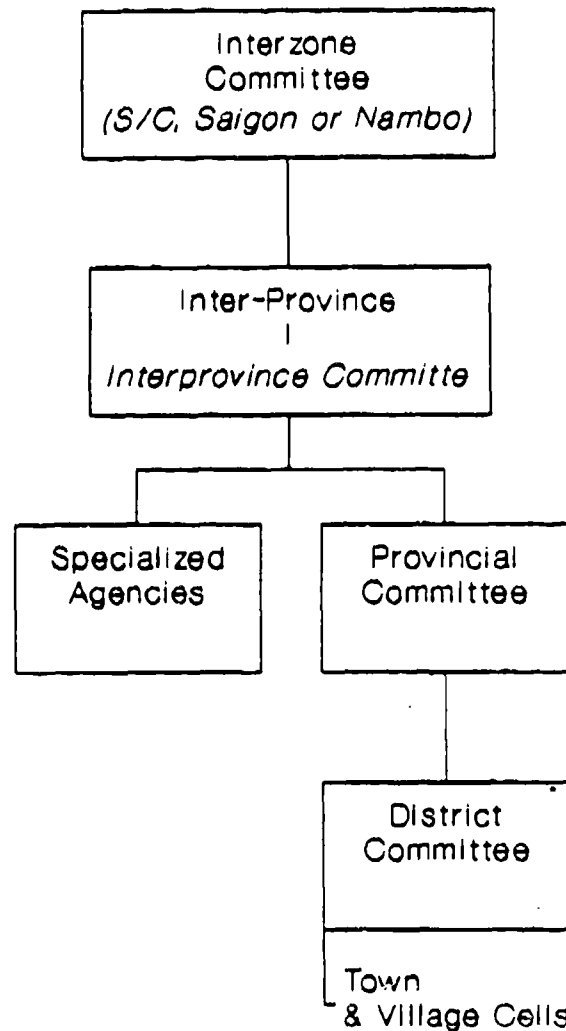


CHART 2: Typical Inter-Province Organization of the Vietcong

In response to this ever-growing communist movement, the South Vietnamese government asked for and received an increase in the numbers of United States military advisors "from around 900 in November 1961 to 11,326 by the end of

1962."⁶⁶ These advisors assisted the South Vietnamese in planning combat operations against the Vietnamese communists.⁶⁷

In 1963 a coup of military leaders disgruntled with the Diem regime, took control of the South Vietnamese government and a series of coups followed as different factions of civilian and military vied for control of the country. Taking advantage of the political instability of the country, the Vietcong started attacking government buildings and officials, as well as military targets such as barracks, troop formations and facilities.⁶⁸ They made between 200 and 300 isolated company and battalion size attacks weekly supported by mortars, flame throwers, recoilless rifles, and some artillery.⁶⁹ By 1964 these attacks caused an increasingly unstable internal security situation. In a ploy by Hanoi to speed victory for the North Vietnamese forces, the first northern regular army (NVA) regiment operated in secrecy in the south.⁷⁰ This

⁶⁶Davidson, Vietnam, 301.

⁶⁷For more information on this advisor process and results, read William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick's book, The Ugly American, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1958).

⁵⁸Marguerite Higgins, Our Vietnam Nightmare (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), 300.

⁶⁹Ibid., 300.

⁷⁰Pike, PAVN, 45.

introduction of NVA units started a race to reinforce the battlefield by both the NVA and the United States and South Vietnamese forces.

In 1965 the United States increased its assistance to South Vietnam to include combat soldiers with combat support and combat service support units, and combined forces consisting of US Air Force, Marine, and Navy equipment and operators.⁷¹ Two marine battalions dispatched to Da Nang were the first US combat troops in Vietnam.⁷² By the end of 1965 there were several more marine units, two army divisions (1st Cavalry Division [Airmobile] and the 1st Infantry Division), the first airborne brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, a Korean division, and several Australian units, as well as combat support and combat service support units from these nations operating in South Vietnam.⁷³

To fight against this massive military influx, the NLF was forced to rely very heavily on the North Vietnamese. Troops, war materiel, organizational expertise, and propaganda support was required on a scale the NLF could not provide from in-country assets. Over the years North Vietnam became, as communist party leaders liked to call it,

⁷¹M. Sivaram, The Vietnam War: Why? (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Publishers, 1966), 123.

⁷²Davidson, Vietnam, 349.

⁷³Palmer, Summons, 113-114.

"a giant rear area" supporting the front lines in South Vietnam. As a result, the NLF found its decisions concerning military and political operations dominated more and more by the communist party and government of North Vietnam such as the decision to conduct an attack against Ap Bac in January 1963.⁷⁴

During 1965 and 1966, large NVA and VC (South Vietnamese communists) forces, often supported by locally based guerrillas, attempted conventional-type engagements against the American and South Vietnamese forces. In most cases they were soundly defeated by the greater fire power, air mobility, and air power of the allied forces.⁷⁵

The battle of Ia Drang in the Central Highlands region of South Vietnam was one example of the North Vietnamese lack of success on the battlefield against US technology. This battle took place in October and November 1965 and inflicted severe losses on the 32nd, 33rd, and 66th North Vietnamese Regular Army (NVA) Regiments, and on several VC regiments. By the end of the battle, the 32nd had been taken out of battle due to its losses, the 33rd's

⁷⁴Truong Nhu Tang, A Vietcong Memoir (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1985), 131.

⁷⁵John F. Sylvester, The Eagle and the Dragon (Philadelphia: Darrance & Co., Inc., 1965), 45.

effective strength was seven hundred out of twenty-two hundred that started the campaign, and the 66th had lost half of its two thousand soldiers.⁷⁶

The North Vietnamese attempted to counter the United States strength on the battlefield by using a strategy called dau tranh. This strategy had been developed in the 1940s by Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh, and Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap in order to fight the wars against the French and Japanese. Borrowing heavily from a strategy developed by Mao Tse-Tung, the Communist Chinese leader, these three North Vietnamese leaders formed the foundation of Vietnamese strategy of revolutionary war, or dau tranh.⁷⁷ It was this strategy the North Vietnamese successfully followed in the Second Indochina war to defeat South Vietnam which was assisted by the United States.

At the end of 1965, the NVA had pushed into South Vietnam due to the lack of success of the VC. This started a race between the United States and North Vietnam to reinforce the South Vietnamese battlefield. Saigon was undergoing a period of coups. This set the stage for the series of decisions made by the North Vietnamese that lead to the major offensive conducted against South Vietnam, called the Tet 1968 Offensive.

⁷⁶Palmer, Summons, 121-123.

⁷⁷Pike, PAVN, 214.

Assumptions

There is only one assumption that bears mentioning: South Vietnam and its allies *militarily* defeated North Vietnam during the Tet offensive of 1968.

Definitions

DIEN BIEN PHU: The 1954 battle and consequent siege of the French stronghold near the town of Dien Bien Phu, in what is now North Vietnam. Mostly because of this resounding Vietminh victory, the North Vietnamese militarily expelled the French from Vietnam. Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap commanded Vietminh forces at Dien Bien Phu. He later commanded all North Vietnamese forces for the Tet offensive of 1968.⁷⁸

GUERRILLA WARFARE: As used within the Vietnamese strategy for revolutionary war, the method of organized fighting in partisan units (South Vietnamese) or with fairly small groups of regular army (NVA) members disguised as civilians and mingling with the people. Guerrillas avoided direct frontal attacks, but conducted harassing, hit-and-run attacks aimed at disrupting the enemy. They cut lines of communication and wore down the enemy by harassment while he

⁷⁸Karnow, History, 198.

slept or ate. The three most prevalent guerrilla tactics were the surprise attack, ambush, and harassment.⁷⁹

HO CHI MINH: North Vietnamese leader who developed the Vietminh as the military branch of dau tranh. He served as President of North Vietnam (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) from 1945 until his death at the age of 79 in September 1969. Revered by General Giap and the North Vietnamese people, he was the prime political strength behind the development of the Vietnamese strategy of revolutionary war.⁸⁰

MAO TSE-TUNG: Leader of "Red" China during the Vietnam war era. North Vietnam used his thoughts on protracted war to develop the Vietnamese strategy of war.⁸¹

MAO TSE-TUNG'S MODEL OF PROTRACTED WAR: A three-phased strategy designed to conduct a struggle within a protracted war scenario. The first phase established the insurgent operation, gaining popular support of the masses by political indoctrination and by proving the insurgents provided a better alternative to the existing government. Phase two was the pivotal phase. Guerrilla warfare con-

⁷⁹Pike, PAVN, 224.

⁸⁰Olsen, Dictionary, 202-203.

⁸¹Ibid., 274-275.

ducted against the government's security forces led to the growing mistrust among the people in the abilities of the existing government to properly administer to the social and economic needs of the population. Phase three used conventional forces against government forces.⁸²

This model's phases were not fixed periods that end as the next begins. This evolving process allowed a force to shift from one phase to another, depending upon the situation. However, Mao envisioned this struggle progressing from phase one to three, in order. This strategy put more emphasis on the military arm of power than the political. The Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee closely controlled all phases of the war.⁸³

MOBILE WARFARE: Fighting by the regular army or by guerrilla forces mustered into relatively large units and coordinated by the regular army. These units used modern weapons, concentrated troops rapidly, conducted a swift attack, encircled the enemy, attacked from the rear, and withdrew quickly. The main characteristic of mobile warfare was to maneuver with flexibility to attack and destroy the enemy.⁸⁴

⁸²Mao Tse-Tung, On Protracted War (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 42.

⁸³Ibid., 39-45.

⁸⁴Ibid., 46.

NORTH VIETNAMESE STRATEGY OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR or DAU TRANH:
A three-phased strategy developed by General Giap, Ho Chi Minh, and Truong Chinh based on the protracted war theory of Mao Tse-Tung. Revolutionists used the integration of two arms of power, political (called political dau tranh) and military (called military dau tranh or struggle) to conduct a war on several different fronts. Centrally controlled, the entire effort and all fronts were carefully synchronized toward the same goal - seizure of political power of a nation-state. Military power, which basically followed the three phases of Mao's model of protracted war, was one tool to achieve national power, however, in the dau tranh model, political power had primacy.⁸⁵

As with Mao's model, this strategy did not necessarily flow strictly from phase one to three in an orderly fashion. Conditions dictated reverting to an earlier phase due to changes in the military, political or economic situation. Chapter 2 contains a detailed description of this strategy and will cite specific examples of how the dau tranh strategy moved from phase to phase to best cope with changing military and political situations.

NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (NLF) or NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM (NFLSVN): United front for the reunification of Vietnam formed in 1960 by Ho Chi Minh. The

⁸⁵Pike, PAVN, 233.

NLF was formed using North Vietnamese advisors and cadre but the bulk of the NLF was South Vietnamese communists. The NLF's activities were controlled by the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) which was in turn controlled by the communist party in Hanoi.⁸⁶

PACIFICATION: A strategy developed by the United States to develop South Vietnam politically, socially and economically used to combat insurgency. Success in building and consolidating popular confidence in the free and democratic regime of South Vietnam and the improvement of rural life all depended on the constituent programs of this major undertaking. Village elections, and the strategic hamlet, ethnic minority, and chieu hoi (open arms) programs are examples of pacification measures that were in place during the Tet offensive.⁸⁷

PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) of PEOPLE'S LIBERATIONS ARMY FRONT (PLAF): Military arm of the People's Liberation Front created in South Vietnam in 1960. These forces were part of the triad of forces used in the Second Indochina war; regular NVA troops, the paramilitary forces from South Vietnam and the PLF. This unit formed the core of armed

⁸⁶Ibid., 44.

⁸⁷MACV Office of Information, "Revolutionary Development: Plan for a New Vietnam." (Saigon: Hqs MACV, February 1967), 3.

struggle within a specific region of the country. They were organized into strong high-quality units, equipped with the necessary weapons, capable of operating either alone in the region or in close coordination with guerrillas and regulars. Their missions were to annihilate the enemy, step up guerrilla warfare, defend the population, and safeguard the people's power.⁸⁸ The North Vietnamese communists and the NVA supplied the PLAF with doctrine and key leadership personnel.⁸⁹

PEOPLE'S SELF DEFENSE FORCES: South Vietnamese communist paramilitary forces made up of guerrillas and self defense squads. These forces had four general missions: to defend their local areas in time of war, to support NVA regulars by assuming specific combat duties in a coordinated attack, to maintain both local political security (versus counter-revolutionaries) and local law and order and to engage in economic production, primarily either food production or construction.⁹⁰

POSITIONAL WARFARE: Regular army units deployed to prepare for a set-piece battle. It involved digging into defensive

⁸⁸Vo Nguyen Giap, National Liberation War in Viet Nam (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971), 47-48.

⁸⁹Ibid., 44.

⁹⁰Pike, PAVN, 126.

positions, setting up fortifications, and taking advantage of the enemy's weak points and inadequacies to attack him and to occupy his positions. Truong Chinh strongly believed:

So long as we are not so well-armed as the enemy, to transition to positional warfare in a hurry is to doom ourselves to failure. This is why guerrilla and mobile warfare are at present the chief forms of fighting and positional warfare only a side-form.⁹¹

PROTRACTED WAR: A strategy that attempted to draw-out the conflict over time to undermine the will of the enemy to continue the fight. Concerning the status of the war in 1965, General Giap stated he was willing to fight for "another twenty years, even a hundred years, as long as it took to win, regardless of cost."⁹² In regard to the cost of war, he stated, "The life or death of a hundred, or a thousand, or of tens of thousands of human beings, even if they are our own compatriots, represents really very little."⁹³

Normally, to accomplish victory in a protracted war, forces operated over an extended, fluid front. Protracted war was usually seen as a struggle between a large military force of a strong country against a small, less well-equipped nation or force.

⁹¹Truong Chinh, Primer, 115.

⁹²"Giap Remembers," The NYTimes Magazine: 57.

⁹³Ibid.

REGULAR TROOPS: Conventional forces which operated anywhere in the country or within certain given strategic areas. They included various armies and armed services, essentially a land army with a ratio of air force and navy assets. Their mission was to conduct large-scale annihilation battles to achieve victory or to "bring about important changes in various theaters of operation."⁹⁴ These forces were called NVA and in the South, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

REPRESSION: Generic term used by the Vietcong to describe the process by which they eliminated, neutralized, punished, and reformed their enemies or persons suspected of being unsympathetic to their cause. Repression was accomplished through assassination, execution, and long-term imprisonment. It also used minor means such as compulsory indoctrination, forced confinement to village or hamlet, or internment for several months in a thought-reform camp.

Repression was usually directed toward government officials or civilians who were not sympathetic to the Vietcong cause. The goal of North Vietnamese repression was to overthrow the government of South Vietnam by undermining its control.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Vo Nguyen Giap, National Liberation, 48.

⁹⁵Stephen T. Hosmer, "Viet Cong Repression and Its Implications for the Future," (Rand Corporation, 1970), 23.

ROLLING THUNDER: United States' bombing operation started on 2 March 1965 and continued until 31 October 1968. Initiated as a reprisal for a NVA attack on a barracks at Qui Nhon, South Vietnam, which killed twenty-three American soldiers and wounded twenty-one others, it originally concentrated on interdicting infiltration routes of supplies and men from North Vietnam.⁹⁶ Rolling Thunder soon expanded to a "tit for tat basis" for North Vietnamese actions against the United States. Military targets within Hanoi, MiG bases, and Haiphong harbor were included in the target list in 1966.⁹⁷

TRUONG CHINH: North Vietnamese military theorist with Marxist/Leninist leanings who, though a close friend of Giap, opposed him on many issues dealing with the conduct of the war.⁹⁸ The secretary-general of the Vietnamese Doc Lao Dong Minh party from 1941-1945, he chaired the meeting in 1945 which made preparations for the August 1945 uprising, resulting in the party taking control over Hanoi and proclaiming the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.⁹⁹ Truong Chinh was part of the "think-tank" that developed the Vietnamese strategy of revolutionary war. In 1958, he was

⁹⁶Palmer, 25 Year War, 36.

⁹⁷ Palmer, Summons, 95-97.

⁹⁸Truong Chinh, Primer, xvii.

⁹⁹Latimer, Hanoi's Leaders, 23.

appointed deputy prime minister of North Vietnam, along with Giap and two other senior officials.¹⁰⁰ Chinh was viewed as a moderate and as an advocate of negotiation, whenever possible.¹⁰¹ Chinh advocated opposing the Mao model of protracted war due to its extremely protracted nature. He felt the North Vietnamese should be "taking advantage of the opportunities to gain victories in a short time."¹⁰²

Perhaps Truong Chinh's greatest contribution to the war effort was his 1947 book entitled The Resistance Will Win. In it, Truong Chinh designed the blueprint for achieving victory in a protracted struggle, stressing the need for self-reliance, and for waging a three-stage war. The three-stage war consisted of defense first, active resistance second, and finally a general counter-offensive, much like the Mao model. This book is included in his Primer for Revolt, published in 1963.¹⁰³

VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS (VIETCONG or VC): Name given by the United States and government of South Vietnam to the coalition of the National Liberation Front (NLF), the People's Self Defense Forces, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces. Consisting mostly of South Vietnamese,

¹⁰⁰Truong Chinh, Primer, xxi.

¹⁰¹Olson, Dictionary, 458.

¹⁰²Palmer, Summons, 81.

¹⁰³Olson, Dictionary, 458-459.

some North Vietnamese cadre who worked within South Vietnam, this coalition received "support and encouragement from Ho Chi Minh's government in Hanoi."¹⁰⁴

VIETNAM DOC LAP DONG MINH, THE LEAGUE FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF VIETNAM OR THE VIETNAM INDEPENDENCE LEAGUE (VIETMINH): Initially formed as a united front army by Ho Chi Minh in May 1941, it later developed into the backbone of the Vietnamese Communist party. Originally led by Ho Ngoc Lam, a non-communist, the Vietminh began as a more non-communist or anti-communist than as a communist organization. Ho Chi Minh "... granted great latitude to non-Party members to encourage their support and to allay their fears, because the Vietminh was based in China and thus heavily dependent on the suspicious Chinese nationalists." This was because Chinese nationalists made up one of the largest factions of the ICP, the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang.¹⁰⁵

VO NGUYEN GIAP: Senior General (equivalent to the United States rank of four star general)¹⁰⁶ Vo Nguyen Giap was the North Vietnamese minister of defense and the commander-in-chief of all North Vietnamese forces during the Viet-

¹⁰⁴Larry Addington, The Patterns of War since the Eighteenth Century (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 268.

¹⁰⁵Pike, PAVN, 25.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 329.

name war with the United States. In 1941 Giap helped Ho Chi Minh form the Vietminh. Between 1941 and 1945 Giap was putting together an army and harassed French and Japanese units in the mountains of the Tonkin region of Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh promoted Giap to General and commander-in-chief of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1946.¹⁰⁷

General Giap served in that capacity in the war against the French in the 1950s. His plan led to the defeat of the French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. He was key in the North Vietnamese decision-making process during the United States involvement in the Vietnam conflict. He provided military guidance on the development of the dau tranh strategy and implemented this program throughout the course of the war. Giap was a believer in direct military confrontation as opposed to guerrilla action.¹⁰⁸ But he realized the need to use guerrilla action while awaiting the right circumstances to launch mobile or conventional war.

Giap believed the only way a revolutionary war could be successful was by the total involvement of the people, providing support to the soldiers conducting the military struggle. To this end, he and the Vietminh worked diligently to integrate people into every aspect of the

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 20-41.

¹⁰⁸Olson, Dictionary, 477-478.

Vietminh cause; political, military, economic, and social. His writings cover this accomplishment in detail.¹⁰⁹

Research Methodology

I used the historical method of research for this study. The primary effort in preparing this thesis has been addressing the political, military, economic, and social issues in each of the main countries involved in the Second Indochina war and how each impacted upon Hanoi's decision to launch the general offensive phase of dau tranh during Tet 1968.

In a historical study, the task is to recreate the past accurately and to interpret the relevant historical data to arrive at sound conclusions. To achieve this, it was necessary to research the literature to document the strategies and actions of Mao Tse-Tung, Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Truong Chinh.

Americans either wrote or translated from Vietnamese into English most of the primary sources. As such, they are probably influenced by some level of cultural bias. Most of my primary sources from North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese Vietcong sources were captured documents, transcripts of radio broadcasts, or translations of newspaper articles. These documents were found in the Indochina Archives Collection of the University of California, Berkeley, and in

¹⁰⁹Vo Nguyen Giap, People's War, 47.

the John M. Echols Collection at Cornell University. Both were non-classified microfiche collections. The first was published as the *History of the Vietnam War*, and the second as *Selections on the Vietnam War*.

The US military's *Records of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam* collection consisted of recently declassified studies and captured Vietcong and North Vietnamese documents gathered by the Combined Intelligence Center of Vietnam from 1965-1973. The US Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, holds this collection. Using these documents enabled me to present the North Vietnamese view.

Secondary sources provided background information on United States, South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese politics, military, economic and social situations. They also furnished information on support given to North Vietnam by both China and the Soviet Union, and an overview of the events that led up to the execution of the Tet offensive in 1968. Appendix 1 contains a selected review of literature. Appendix 2 is an acronym list.

Given the nature of the sources I have used, a word about methodology is worthwhile. When attempting to evaluate material from the capitals of communist countries, it appears impossible to sort the purely propagandistic items from the genuinely substantive. Much of the material published by Hanoi was designed simply to attack the United

States and its allies or to simulate the party rank and file or the people at large. However, the party leadership has to inform its cadre of the party line, the party's policy at any given time. This was done in face-to-face meetings to hand out instructions. It was also necessary, however, to supplement lectures with printed or broadcast material. Every party cadre who wanted to keep abreast of what the leadership in Hanoi thought about current developments read the party daily, Nhan Dan, (People). In Nhan Dan he could find the line, the attitude he should take in his daily contacts with his cell or his organization or his government. Even more important was the party's theoretical journal, Hoc Tap (Studies), which contained lengthier articles which set important events or problems in their historical and ideological framework.

In order for the party to function, it must inform its members of major changes in the line. By reading these two sources (contained in both the Echols and Indochina Archives collections) communist party members could discern changes in the party line.

On the surface, it would appear that because the top-level members of the communist Vietnamese Party political bureau had worked closely together for many years, there simply cannot be deep divisions among them. We should not refuse to examine the available evidence on the assumption that because there have been no purges within the

have existed between members have had significant effects on the way the party attempted to take control over South Vietnam. Those differences delayed the decision to start an armed conflict in South Vietnam and the decision to send North Vietnamese troops to South Vietnam. They also caused considerable confusion in the party's ranks over just how the war was to be fought at various periods, such as the time of the Tat offensive in 1968.

Limitations

Several methodology limitations apply to this study. First, by its very nature, historical research is extremely vulnerable to the selection and interpretation of sources by the author. Therefore, clearly identified sources of information will permit readers to make a judgment on the validity of the research source for themselves.

Time limits and the passing of key players prevented me from interviewing the major decision-makers to find out first-hand what their intents and strategies were. I chose not to use classified material in this study because of time constraints, handling problems, and the desire to make this study available to the general public.

Organization

Organization of this thesis first allows the reader to gain an insight into the historical setting in which the Tet offensive of 1968 occurred. Chapter Two presents an overview of the basic philosophy of both the Mao Tse-Tung Model for Revolutionary War and the Vietnamese Revolutionary War Strategy. This overview provides the basis for understanding the reasons why the North Vietnamese decided to transition to a general uprising and general offensive (phase III) of the North Vietnamese strategy for revolutionary war during Tet 1968. Also this chapter outlines the thoughts of Mao Tse-Tung, Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap and Truong Chinh concerning the execution of the strategy. Lastly, this chapter includes a historical example of how and why the Vietminh transitioned to phase three in 1951 during their war with the French.

Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six, contain in-depth examination of the political, military, economic, and social situations of the key countries of North and South Vietnam, and the United States. These situations determine what influenced Hanoi's decision to transition to phase three. Chapter Seven contains conclusions that have resulted from this study.

Significance of the Study

Though many authors have written about the military execution of the 1968 Tet offensive, few have focused on the specifics of the transition to a general offensive by the North Vietnamese. By giving insight from the leaders of North Vietnam, their strategies, and on the effects of the personalities of the planners on those strategies, we can better understand the conduct of the war. This study will show why the North Vietnamese decided to conduct their general offensive phase during Tet 1968. Critics have much debated this piece of the Vietnam War puzzle, but have not thoroughly understood it.

CHAPTER TWO

MAO TSE-TUNG'S THEORY OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND THE VIETNAMESE STRATEGY OF DAU TRANH

It is impossible to predict the concrete situations in the three stages, but certain main trends. . . may be pointed out. . . . The objective course of events will be exceedingly rich and varied, with many twists and turns, and nobody can cast a horoscope for the. . . war; nevertheless it is necessary for the strategic direction of the war to make a rough sketch of its trends. . . .¹

Mao Tse-Tung, 1967

Introduction

When the Vietnamese decided to take up an armed struggle in 1941 against forces that occupied their country, they had to develop a strategy to conduct this struggle. Ho Chi Minh, leader of North Vietnam, Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, North Vietnamese minister of defense and commander in chief of all armed forces, and Truong Chinh, a trusted Hc advisor on Marxist theories who served as secretary-general of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Indochina (Lao Dong) from 1941-1945 debated different strategies.²

Two existing strategies, the Marxist-Leninist and Mao Tse-Tung's strategy for revolutionary war, developed in

¹Mao, Protracted, 42.

²Olson, Dictionary, 458.

the 1920s, were discussed.³ The Marxist-Leninist model advocated a small, well-disciplined, well-organized, revolutionary group could obtain the support of large numbers of the members of the proletariat class who performed most critical government legitimacy functions, such as police forces and civil laborers essential to internal economic stability. Mass mobilization of the general population against the government was not necessary. As most political and economic power was concentrated in the cities, most activity occurred there.⁴ This model was soon dismissed as the Vietnamese proletariat class within Vietnam was not large enough to support this type of movement.

Truong Chinh advocated using the Mao model, which used peasants, instead of the Marxist-Leninist proletariat, to carry out the revolution. This major difference existed because China's working class, like Vietnam's, was not large enough to organize a Marxist-Leninist type revolution.⁵ By waging war with lightly armed guerrilla forces recruited from the local population, little commitment of personnel

³Ibid., 275.

⁴US Army Command and General Staff College, "C-5000, Operations In Low Intensity Conflict." (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College, January 1992), 31.

⁵Victor M. Rosello, "The Significance of Organizational Flexibility in Communist Revolutionary Warfare Doctrine and Practice." (Monograph: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1989), 8.

and materiel would be required by North Vietnam, allowing the country to concentrate on building a strong industrial and agricultural base.⁶

Due to his time in China, Ho Chi Minh was very familiar with Mao Tse-Tung's theory of revolutionary war. However, Ho was the ultimate politician. He believed political power had primacy over military and that political power should be used to attempt a solution before using military force. Ho wanted to be able to use the power of other governments to influence the outcome of the Vietnamese struggle. Mao's strategy, being almost strictly military in nature, did not appeal to Ho's political nature.⁷

Ho had little military experience and he relied very heavily on his chief military advisor, Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, the commander of all North Vietnamese military forces. Giap spent two years in Communist China in the 1930s learning about armed struggle as it progressed under Mao's model. Though he believed in the phases of revolutionary war, Giap wanted to be able to move his military forces in and out of phases as the military and political situations dictated. This would allow him to take advantage of these situations instead of relying on protracted war to wear down the enemy's will to fight. Mao's model was disagreeable to Giap because of its strict phasing.

⁶Truong Chinh, Primer, iv.

⁷Ho Chi Minh, On Revolution, 357.

General Giap, who called himself "the Communist Napoleon of Asia and, like Napoleon, favored decisive big-unit battles, as pointed out in a Rand Corporation Study in 1972. His discussion about strategy devoted more time than Truong Chinh did to the need for modern weapons. . . ."⁸ Giap favored using technology, to include air power and air defense artillery, and well-equipped large forces in conventional warfare once the stage had been set by guerrilla warfare.⁹

The Framework of Dau Tranh

The Vietnamese used the framework of Mao's model of revolutionary war, but placed more emphasis on the total war concept. War was fought in political, economic, and social arenas, as well as in the military. The Vietnamese strategy of revolutionary war, or the dau tranh strategy proved successful in 1954 against the French in the First Indochina War, and against the government of South Vietnam supported by the United States in the Second Indochina War.

The Maoist revolution and dau tranh were both controlled by policy decisions made by the Communist Party's Central Committee. The political commissar of each country,

⁸Brian M. Jenkins, "Giap and the Seventh Son." (Rand Corporation Study, 1972), 4.

⁹Douglas M. Eye, "The Generalship of Giap." (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: US Army War College, 16 March 1973), 4-5.

Mao Tse-Tung and Ho Chi Minh, approved all command decisions before the military units carried them out.¹⁰

Militarily, Mao's theory and dau tranh moved through three distinct phases. These progressed from guerrilla warfare, where the revolutionary guerrillas are weaker than the government forces, to the stage of equilibrium where the strength of the two opposing forces were nearly equal. Then the revolutionists used regular army forces in mobile operations and battles grew larger and larger until at the end of phase two some conventional type battles were fought. Phase three was conventional war characterized by large-scale battles.¹¹ The form of fighting used within each phase, guerrilla, mobile, and conventional, was determined by the attainment of long term strategic goals, such as the political takeover of a country, and **NOT** on short term tactical expediency, such as winning a single battle.¹² Page 53 contains a graphic representation of the dau tranh strategy of revolutionary war.

Phase one of both strategies consisted of undeveloped and emerging revolutionary activity. The revolutionists patiently developed favorable operating conditions such as

¹⁰Pike, PAVN, 164.

¹¹Mao, Protracted, 44.

¹²Michael D. Ryan, "Operational Art in Modern Revolutionary Warfare: Vo Nguyen Giap and the French-Indochina War (1947-1954)." (Research Paper, US National War College, 1986), 5.

areas of support among the population, in secure or "liberated" base areas. Patience was important because the foundation for this strategy was protracted war. Execution of protracted war took considerable commitment and time. It needed years to successfully develop through the three phases, depending on the political and military situations. Therefore, both the revolutionists and the civilian population required a deep commitment to the goal.¹³

DAU TRANH

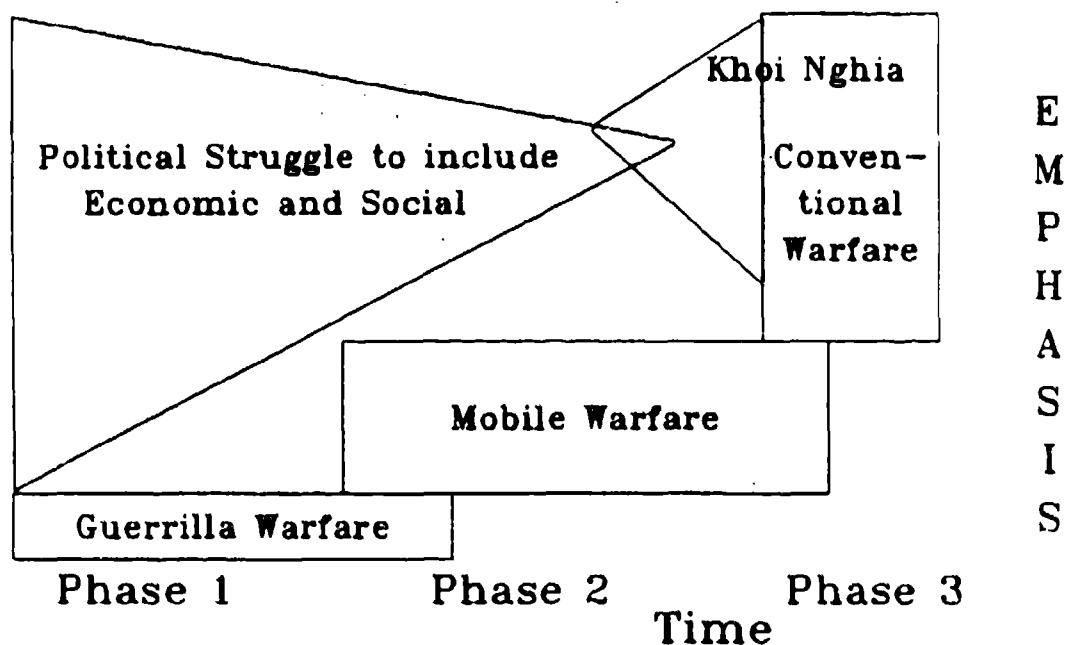


Figure 1: The Dau Tranh Strategy of Revolutionary War

¹³Mao, Protracted, 39.

This commitment was instilled through extensive indoctrination by the communist cadres, or if the audience was not receptive, the cadre would commit acts of repression to "encourage" support. Indoctrination consisted mainly of training cadre on the communist manifesto, communist party doctrine, policies, and goals and instruction on the strategic principles of revolutionary warfare, as well as conventional military subjects.¹⁴ As related by Giap, in order to train the cadre as he did in the 1940s, the revolutionists had to establish a nucleus of well-trained cadre that would then go forth to spread the word of communism. Giap put great emphasis on the development of this cadre base, saying:

The building and training of a cadre organization is a very important problem, a key point in the task of building up the armed forces. Our armed forces, developed from nothing, have a large cadre organization that is absolutely faithful to the revolutionary enterprise of the Party and people. They have been and are constantly being trained and seasoned in the revolutionary struggle and long, hard, armed struggle....¹⁵

Those cadre or indoctrinated revolutionists, actively recruited more followers for their cause, organized the revolution at the village level, and placed emphasis on gaining more popular support. This support was garnered through actions designed to provide a better life for the

¹⁴Ryan, "Operational Art," 11.

¹⁵Vo Nguyen Giap, Banner of People's War. The Party's Military Line (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1970), 38.

population such as land reform programs. In order to be successful, the revolutionists did not have to provide a perfect administration or solution for the people, just a BETTER system or way of life. In rural Vietnam, the economic issue of overwhelming significance in Party activities was land. Party propaganda constantly referred to this issue of landlord versus peasant. For example, in 1959, the North Vietnamese published a leaflet discussing the fact that land distributed to the peasants during the French resistance period had been reoccupied by the Diem-sponsored landlords after the Geneva Accords.¹⁶ Properly executed, programs of land reform and anti-government propaganda were designed to lead to more support for the revolutionary movement from the peasants.¹⁷

The limited military action that occurred during phase one consisted of small guerrilla actions, controlled by the communist political leadership, and led by the indoctrinated cadre. These actions were aimed at undermining government control or security of the people by attacking government troops, police, or other symbols of the government's authority.¹⁸

After they gained approximately equal strength with the government military and political forces, the insurgents

¹⁶Race, Long An, 90.

¹⁷Karnow, History, 225.

¹⁸Pike, PAVN, 27.

moved into the mobile warfare phase, or phase two. By the use of military force and through indoctrination, they increased control over greater geographic areas and within these areas provided a communist-controlled government structure, to include village chiefs approved by the communist party. Throughout this phase, as in phase one, the communists continued to build-up their own military and political strength, and waged guerrilla actions designed to militarily tie-down the government security forces. This led the population to have a stronger sense of mistrust in the abilities of the existing government to protect them.¹⁹ The second phase of Mao's and the dau tranh strategy was pivotal. The mobilization of most people was completed as ordered by the political commissar and the civilian population was prepared to whole-heartedly support revolutionary movement through to the final offensive.²⁰

This support by the population was **ESSENTIAL** to the movement. According to Giap, the "inexhaustible source" of revolutionary power resides in the people. Failure to gain support of the people guaranteed defeat, regardless of the quantity or quality of the force or equipment. If the masses did not support the movement, the North Vietnamese forces would not be able to operate in the area due to lack of food, recruits, and intelligence. This is not to say

¹⁹Mao, Protracted, 39.

²⁰Ibid., 39.

Giap felt popular support was the **ONLY** requirement for winning, but it was the **FUNDAMENTAL BASE** upon which a large, well-equipped force could be built. Without this foundation, the additional structure necessary for victory would soon crumble. This foundation was essential also to provide intelligence to the revolutionary forces as this played a vital role in exploiting the government's weaknesses in battle.²¹

In phase two, the military forces of the revolutionists reach a point where they become stronger than the government troops.²² In the Mao model, this was the time to transition to phase three, or general offensive. In dau tranh, in addition to the military strength of the Vietnamese being greater than that of the government's soldiers,²³ the leaders had to take into account the political dimensions of the struggle as well, such as the support of the people, the weakened enemy will, and the extreme demoralization of his troops before making the decision to launch a general offensive.²⁴

Mobile warfare was the tactic most widely used during the first part of phase three. In addition to NVA troops,

²¹Vo Nguyen Giap, Big Victory, Great Task (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 52.

²²Truong Chinh, Primer, 114.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Pike, PAVN, 225.

by using many guerrilla groups together to form company sized or larger units, mobile warfare could be transformed into conventional warfare. A few large-scale, well-coordinated, and resourced attacks were conducted against targets designed to further impact psychologically upon the enemy.²⁵

The third stage was the shortest phase. It culminated in all forces throughout the country, guerrillas, NVA, and regional forces, thrown into battle to completely crush the enemy and to win back all of the disputed territory to include the cities.²⁶ To assist with this final battle, the communists incited the people to stage a mass uprising, or in Vietnamese, *khôi nghĩa*. *Khôi nghĩa* culminated in the rising of the revolutionary consciousness of the people. Douglas Pike, noted Vietnamese scholar, says this consciousness,

. . .explodes in a great human spontaneous combustion, which, like a forest fire, consumes all before it. The people rise up energized. The enemy's army shatters. The old society crumbles. The people seize power.²⁷

Truong Chinh spoke of launching these mass "uprisings simultaneously in main towns, which would allow a more

²⁵Truong Chinh, Primer, 145.

²⁶Ibid., 146.

²⁷Pike, PAVN, 218.

decisive and better managed seizing of power and would end by robbing [the enemy forces] of their power."²⁸

Thus the military strategies of Mao and of dau tranh can be described as "first the mountains, then the countryside, then the cities." The communist first indoctrinated small cells of cadre who then went down from their hideouts in the mountains to the rural countryside where they gained the support of the people. After support was guaranteed, the revolutionary forces, together with the people, attacked the government, ensuring victory for the revolution.²⁹

The Differences between Mao's Strategy and Dau Tranh

Dau tranh's major addition to the Mao strategy was its integration of two different elements of power, political power and military power, with political having primacy. In Vietnamese these were called dau tranh chinh tri (political struggle) and dau tranh vu trang (armed struggle). A single leader, with a single goal conducted all struggles through totally indoctrinated cadre who further used indoctrination or repression to sway the masses to the communist way of thinking.³⁰

The second major difference was the Vietnamese characteristic of "interlocking" war, unlike the Maoist

²⁸Truong Chinh, Primer, 37-38.

²⁹Mao, Protracted, 46.

³⁰Pike, PAVI, 216.

model, involved the use of regular army, militia, and guerrilla forces together. When the decimated regular force was unable to continue to fight in the battle, the militia forces and the guerrilla forces pressed the fight using guerrilla tactics behind the enemy's lines.³¹ In organizing this triad of regular (NVA), regional (NLF), and militia forces (self-defense or guerrilla), Giap remained ever cognizant of the necessity of staying in harmony with the strategic guiding principles (protracted war, self-reliant forces, and people's war). He looked upon this triad organization as the only approach which successfully matched available means to desired ends and remained consistent with the realities of fighting. Giap laid down specific tasks for each type of force and specific goals these tasks were designed to achieve.³²

According to Giap, the regular army was a modern armed force, highly mobile, able to fight independently or in coordination with the other branches and services. The regular army was the main power in a conventional war and conducted the main attack in battle to achieve victory over enemy forces. It did not usually conduct guerrilla warfare. The self-defense forces were designed to "replenish the permanent army, maintain security and protect production, and to serve the front-lines and conduct guerrilla warfare

³¹Truong Chinh, Primer, 139.

³²Ryan, "Operational Art," 11.

in wartime. . . ." These units conducted the secondary attacks.³³ The regional force served as the core for local or guerrilla battles. It fought the battles and tilled the soil at the same time. Its mission was to wear down the enemy or to shape the battlefield conditions for the regular force. Able to combine with both the self-defense forces and the regular army on the battlefield, it also conducted extensive reconnaissance missions and provided intelligence about the forces within the area.³⁴

In addition to the two major differences of the integration of political and military power and the concept of interlocking war, several others separated dau tranh from its Maoist model foundation. The Chinese revolution was primarily a civil war between the Chinese Communist and Chinese Nationalist forces. The colonialist French and later a questionably legitimate government supported by the United States, an external superpower, opposed the North Vietnamese. Therefore, to a greater extent than with Mao's model, the dau tranh strategy was constantly revised, changed, and adapted, both militarily and politically, to counter unique international political and military situations, such as the above mentioned interference by other nations, and those nations bringing political pressure to bear upon North Vietnam to conduct peace negotiations.

³³Pike, PAVN, 125.

³⁴Ibid., 126.

Giap, unlike Mao, did not believe in the supremacy of human will in warfare. He believed human will and weapons were of equal significance in war.³⁵ This led to the North Vietnamese reliance on bigger and more well-equipped units to fight the war in stages two and three. In Mao's model, the people fought without the aid of heavy weapons. Mao felt revolutionists, without support of heavy weapons but with the support of the population within the "liberated areas," could fight the government indefinitely. Dau tranh relied on conventional warfare in phases two and three, concentrating troops with the aid of whatever military materiel was available from internal or external support.³⁶

Dau tranh, due to the types of wars used for, retained more flexibility than the Maoist theory. When a setback occurred, the revolutionary forces either changed the form of combat or reverted to an earlier phase until political, military, economic, and social conditions were again right to progress into the next higher phase.³⁷ Understanding the "art" dau tranh meant understanding when to transition to the next phase or to revert to an earlier phase and what type of power was used, at what time. General Giap believed the form of combat and the phase must

³⁵Davidson, Vietnam, 20.

³⁶Giap, Victory, 54.

³⁷Truong Chinh, Primer, 52.

be chosen by "an analysis of the strategic factors actually existing at any given moment."³⁸ Phases were adapted to fit the strategic or operational situation. Knowing when to transition or which type of power to exert at what time was based on a leader's gut feelings with the information available at the time. As pointed out by Giap:

If insurrection is said to be an art, the main content of this art is to know how to give to the struggle forms appropriate to the political situation at each stage, how to maintain the correct relation between the forms of the political struggle and those of the armed struggle in the period.³⁹

Political Struggle - Dau Tranh Chinh Tri

Throughout the Vietnamese strategy, political dau tranh or dau tranh chinh tri used not only political power to achieve its aim, but economic, ideological, sociological, and psychological power as well. Dau tranh chinh tri was divided into dan van, dich van, and binh van.⁴⁰

Dan van (action among the people) normally consisted of non-military action used to mobilize, indoctrinate, and motivate the people to assist in the war effort throughout the military phases. This program employed repression, propaganda and limited guerrilla action against the government and its symbols of authority to achieve this aim. In phase one of the military struggle, the communists provided

³⁸Davidson, Vietnam, 20.

³⁹Giap, Banner, 76.

⁴⁰Pike, PAVN, 216.

to the people under their control, village administration, communal and private acreage food production, a means of adjudicating of disputes, medical care, internal communication, and monitored and policed the whole system.⁴¹ Other functions of government, such as local defense units, recruitment pools, and a tax base, were also established to support the war effort.⁴²

Ho Chi Minh and General Giap personally approved the South Vietnamese communists placed in these leadership positions in these zones. The communist cadre of the NLF, usually the political officers, watched over and controlled these village leaders. Hanoi, through the COSVN, kept in constant touch with these subordinates to assure both unity of command and unity of effort on operational and strategic levels.⁴³ Senior General Giap, though mostly involved in the military arm of dau tranh, described the forces that would have to band together in order to stage a successful dau tranh chinh tri action, in his 1970 work, Banner of People's War:

Our political force is a force of all the people that participates in uprisings and wars in an organized manner under the Party's vanguard leadership. It includes revolutionary classes, patriotic elements and nationalists in our country who have assembled in a

⁴¹Ibid., 246.

⁴²Congress of the NLF, "The Political Program of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam," (Communist Party of Australia, Mid-August 1967), 5.

⁴³Ryan, "Operational Art," 12.

broad, united national front, under working class leadership, with the worker-peasant alliance as a foundation.⁴⁴

As mentioned above, the political force was comprised of those civilians, military cadre members, and political officers responsible for inciting the civilian population to conduct the *khôi nghĩa*, essential to a successful phase three.

If the uprising of the majority of the people had not occurred during the "August Revolution" (the Vietnamese revolt against the Japanese revolt in 1945 as explained in Chapter 1) Truong Chinh felt two things could have happened:

First, the French colonists could have found a way out; they would have won and exploited the elements unfavourable to the Revolution, and basing themselves on the latter's attitude, would have been able to declare before the U.N.O. and the world that the Vietnamese people welcomed the restoration of their power; at the same time they would have accused the forces of insurrection, as being "rebellious elements", preventing them from disarming the Japanese troops and restoring order and peace in Indo-China, etc.⁴⁵

This popular uprising lent "legitimacy" to the revolution by providing proof a majority of the people believe in a single objective, to overthrow the existing Japanese government and establish a communist one. This provided an united front to the international community.

The second subset of political *dau tranh* was dich van (action among the enemy) which again occurred throughout all

⁴⁴Giap, Banner, 28.

⁴⁵Truong Chinh, Primer, 33.

military phases. Dich van consisted of non-military activities among the population controlled by the enemy. In the case of the Second Indochina War, the populations being targeted were the South Vietnamese who lived in the "un-liberated areas" of South Vietnam and the American civilians who resided in South Vietnam and the population in the United States. Propaganda designed to divide, disrupt, and influence public opinion against the United States and the government of South Vietnam's war effort in the Second Indochina War was an example of dich van. In 1968 General Giap stressed the importance of dich van, when he said:

Our people greatly appreciate the struggle of the American people against the aggressive Viet-Nam war of the Johnson Administration, considering it a valuable mark of sympathy and support of our people's just resistance. Moreover, our people are thoroughly aware that the decisive factor for the success of the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance is their objective efforts to turn the balance of forces more and more in our favor on the Viet-Nam battlefield. . . .⁴⁶

In propaganda actions against foreign nations that opposed them, the North Vietnamese focused on explaining their "just cause" and attempting to "expose the enemy's schemes before the world"⁴⁷ in order to win over the enemy's civilian population. By making full use of the disparity in beliefs between the enemy's people and the

⁴⁶Giap, Victory, 56.

⁴⁷Ho Chi Minh, "President Ho Chi Minh Answers President L. B. Johnson" (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1967), 11.

people of the other countries of the world, the popular opinion chasm was further widened. For example, by infiltrating its soldiers south from North Vietnam and insisting the war in South Vietnam was a civil war between the Vietcong and the government of South Vietnam, the communists hoped to cause a rift between the countries providing military aid to South Vietnam, such as the United States, and its allies. This would bring political and social pressure to bear upon the United States attempting to persuade it to stop providing assistance and aid to South Vietnam.

The third *dau tranh chinh tri*, binh van (action among the military), used non-military action to disaffect the enemy soldier. Binh van attempted to convert the enemy's military and civil servants to the communist cause and to weaken or destroy the armed forces and the governmental structure by nonmilitary means. This was mainly accomplished through propaganda aimed at the enemy, such as English radio broadcasts from "Radio Hanoi" complete with Hanoi Hannah reciting propaganda to the United States soldier, saying, "Why are you fighting against the peace-loving people of Vietnam? Who is your wife sleeping with while you are fighting an unjust war in the jungle?" ⁴⁸

The three programs of political power overlapped the military *dau tranh* phases. For example, in military phase

⁴⁸Echols Collection on the Vietnam War, microfische.

one when the enemy possessed more strength than the revolutionaries, political dau tranh was the dominant arm of power. In phase two of the model, enemy and friendly being roughly equal in power, the arms of political and military were applied with equal vigor as well. By phase three the political effort was just a pale shade of phase two, having relinquished most of the action to the military arm until just before and during khoi nghia when a great deal of political power was exerted to incite the people to rise up against the government.⁴⁹

Transitioning in Dau Tranh

In order to understand why the North Vietnamese opted to transition to phase three of dau tranh during Tet 1968, several specific issues must be examined. Trying to determine exactly what those criteria were, and how they were measured is a complicated undertaking. Truong Chinh provided some insight into this thought process by an evaluation he did of the August revolution in which the Japanese were expelled from Indochina due to the military, political, and social actions taken against them. According to Truong Chinh, the three main strengths of the revolution were correct leadership, promptitude and timeliness, and an overall rising by the entire people.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Pike, PAVN, 234.

⁵⁰Truong Chinh, Primer, 28.

Correct leadership of the Indochinese Communist party consisted of its work of organization and preparation during the pre-insurrectionary period. This involved proper political indoctrination of the forces, mobilization of manpower and money to support the movement, train political cadres, procure arms, train self defense forces, carry out propaganda campaigns, launch guerrilla warfare, and seize power in the different regions of the country.⁵¹

During the struggle with the French in the 1950s, General Giap stated the criteria for the transition to phase three were:

- (1) superiority of our forces over those of the enemy;
- (2) the international situation is in our favor; (3) the military situation is in our favor. We will have to receive aid from abroad in order to be able to carry out the counter-offensive, but to count solely upon it without taking into account our own capabilities is to show proof of subjectivism and of lack of political conscience. But on the other hand we cannot deny the importance of such aid.⁵²

Therefore according to Giap and Truong Chinh, the decision points for transitioning to phase three were:

- 1) military strength superior to the enemy
- 2) international situation that was favorable
- 3) military situation that was favorable
- 4) leadership that was correct
- 5) promptitude and timeliness
- 6) uprising by the entire people

⁵¹Ibid., 28-29.

⁵²Fall, Street, 35.

A Historical Example

Since the basis for dau tranh transitions concerned the balance of political, military, economic, and social strength of the opponents and to gain a historical perspective of how the North Vietnamese transitioned within the dau tranh strategy, some of these aspects will be examined as they related to the First Indochina war. The focus will be on how the Vietminh forces under General Giap failed to achieve the transition to phase three during their struggle with the French forces in 1951.

On the international scene, both China and the Soviet Union recognized the Vietminh's struggle against France. In 1950, China began assisting the Vietminh with military aid, to include advisors and materiel such as automatic weapons, mortars, howitzers, and even trucks. Some of this war materiel was American-made, captured from Chiang Kai-shek's defeated Nationalists.⁵³ Even more important, was the "sanctuary" China provided for the Vietminh to train, refit, and prepare to launch attacks.⁵⁴ On 1 May 1950, the United States decided to begin providing monetary and materiel aid to the French struggle in Indochina.⁵⁵ Soon after that date, the war in Korea began, with China

⁵³Karnow, History, 181.

⁵⁴Fall, Street, 27.

⁵⁵Karnow, History, 177.

communist Korean force.⁵⁶ In September 1950, the United States government established a small U.S. military assistance and advisory group (MAAG) in Saigon.⁵⁷ Within France, it was common knowledge dissatisfaction of the French population existed concerning the execution of the war in Indochina. The French people were tired of war and wanted to use the money being poured into the colonial struggles to rebuild their homeland. Headlines in Paris anticipated the fall of Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh's forces.⁵⁸

However, within the French-held portion of Vietnam, positive changes occurred among the French military. In mid-December the French received a new commander, Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny. After evaluating the intelligence available on the suspected communist general-offensive, de Lattre immediately set about to strengthen France's hold on Vietnam. He freed up more soldiers for the combat forces using French civilians for guard duties. He declared the French would defend the delta area and emphasized this point by refusing to evacuate the French women and children in the area, to include his own wife. He strengthened the outposts and defensive positions in the delta and integrated French air forces into his planning. French morale, under this no-

⁵⁶Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., The Army and Vietnam (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 18.

⁵⁷Palmer, 25 Year War, 5.

⁵⁸Fall, Street, 26.

nonsense commander, was on an upswing.⁵⁹ He made no promises for reinforcements, improvements, or easy victories. The one thing de Lattre de Tassigny promised and delivered was, "That no matter what, you will be commanded." His firm and intelligent leadership provided the soldiers and civilians their incentive to continue to fight.⁶⁰

Within Vietnam political and economic events unfolded which caused consternation for the leadership of the Vietminh and communists, especially Ho and Giap. The nationalists within Vietnam cautiously threw their support behind the French in a "lesser of two evils coalition" against the communists. They believed that if France could be convinced to quickly transfer the power of the country to the Bao Dai regime, a dramatic shift in the balance of power within the country would take place because the population would then support the Bao Dai regime instead of the communists. Ho's communist party would then lose power. France, of course, did not agree to this proposal.⁶¹

In 1950, Ho evaluated the situation from his headquarters in the jungle north of Hanoi. His forces in northern Vietnam again suffered from a rice shortage, as they had in 1945, and the troops were on short rations. If the communists could take over the rich rice fields of the

⁵⁹Davidson, Vietnam, 102.

⁶⁰BDM, "Strategic Lessons" Vol VI, 1-3.

⁶¹Bui Diem, Jaws of History, 67.

Red River valley in the north and the Mekong delta in the South, rice would no longer be a problem.⁶²

Military manpower pools had dried up within the local population bases. The communists needed a larger population base from which to draw soldiers. If they could secure the main population centers around Saigon and Hanoi, as well as the delta areas, a large number of people would be available to both draw from militarily and to further the communist claim of legitimacy.⁶³

General Giap, aware of international and national situations, understood the United States reluctance to commit its forces to a "colonial" war. He felt it was important to annihilate the French forces before the Americans could be persuaded by the French to join in the struggle or to provide the French with more military aid. The military strength of his Vietminh troops in the Tonkin area was equal to the French who opposed them. However, Giap believed his troops' morale was higher than the French forces due to the success of his 1950 border campaign where his forces defeated the French at Lao Cai, Cao Bang, and Lang Son.⁶⁴ This campaign also gained a strip of the Chinese Vietnamese border territory north of the Red River to use as a base of operations. These unqualified successes

⁶²Karnow, History, 186.

⁶³Davidson, Vietnam, 107-108.

⁶⁴Eye, "Generalship," 8.

may have had a heady effect on the general, and Giap, aware the French would soon regroup to launch a counterattack, argued with Ho Chi Minh for a massive preemptive strike. Ho, in a discussion with his military leaders in December 1950, cautioned that the Vietnamese forces must win time in order to fully prepare for an offensive.⁶⁵ He further cautioned Giap to never "underestimate the enemy. We still have to win many more victories before we can switch over to the general counteroffensive."⁶⁶

Some external pressure to switch to the counter-offensive may have been brought to bear on the communists by General Lo Guipo, a Chinese Communist veteran assigned by Mao as the diplomatic representative and military advisor to the Vietminh. With this outside influence from China as well as military assistance in the form of advisors and weapons, and with pressure from Giap and Truong Chinh convinced the time was right, Ho decided to transition into the third phase of dau tranh in January 1951.⁶⁷

Using the criteria for transition as we determined above, the Vietnamese believed:

1) they were militarily as strong if not stronger than the French, in numbers of forces, experience, and morale.

⁶⁵Ho, Revolution, 203.

⁶⁶Ibid., 204.

⁶⁷Karnow, Vietnam, 186.

2) the international situation was favorable but could rapidly deteriorate if the United States decided to provide more materiel, money, or even soldiers to the struggle. Plus, China supported a Vietnamese offensive.

3) the French grew stronger militarily every day, due to replacements, the building of new fortifications, and the leadership of de Lattre and, therefore, needed to be hit hard, soon.

4) the French leadership was certainly meeting the challenge and would get stronger with time. However, the Vietnamese leadership of Giap and Ho felt they were superior, having years of war experience behind them.

5) to take military action, time was of the essence, before the advantages above shifted to the French side.

6) an overall rising by the entire people in the French areas would take place as reported by communist cells located in those areas.⁶⁸

On 10 January 1951, 81 Vietminh battalions, the majority of Giap's forces, poised in the Red River Valley for the general counter-offensive. Their goal was to secure Hanoi and the entire delta area. The underground movement distributed leaflets, an important propaganda tool, in Hanoi which said Ho Chi Minh and his soldiers would be in Hanoi before Tet. Tet is the Chinese lunar new year which usually falls in the middle of February. This propaganda was de-

⁶⁸Karnow, History, 182.

signed to incite the population to assist in the offensive by *khôi nghĩa* against the French.

On 13 January the main attack and the standard Giap tactic of a diversionary attack began.⁶⁹ By 18 June that same year, after three attempts to conduct the general offensive (Vinh Yen, 13 - 17 January, Mao Khe, 23 - 28 March and Day River, 29 May - 18 June 1951), the Vietminh were almost completely defeated. A combination of massive air campaigns, naval gun fire, massive rains which hampered supply efforts, Catholic anti-communist communities who not only did not assist the Vietnamese in *khôi nghĩa* but resisted them with locally organized militia units, and a stubborn French defense caused this defeat. Giap exited the offensive with an estimated twenty thousand Vietnamese dead or wounded.⁷⁰

In 1951, Ho, Truong Chinh and Giap gambled on a quick counter-offense; an abortive effort to move into phase three of *dau tranh*. They failed to take into account the technological superiority of the French which provided superior firepower. This was a violation of the first criteria for transition, to be militarily as strong or stronger than the enemy. The failure to incite the people to rise up in *khôi nghĩa*, point six, also proved to be a decisive factor in the Vietnamese loss. Faced with this

⁶⁹Fall, Street, 36.

⁷⁰Karnow, History, 187.

severe setback, the communists reverted to phase two of dau tranh to wait for an "opportune moment" to once again attempt a general offensive or uprising.

Summary

This gambling spirit of Giap's arose again in 1967 when North Vietnam wrestled with some of the same type of military, political, economic, and social problems that it faced in 1950. Giap's inability to learn from his past mistakes and his impatience would again negatively affect the Vietnamese military effort in 1968 as will be analyzed in following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL ISSUES

Ours is always a synthesis, simultaneously military, political, and diplomatic ~ which is why, quite clearly, the offensive had multiple objectives. We foresaw uprisings in the cities. But above all, we wanted to show the Americans that we were not exhausted, that we could attack their arsenals, communications, elite units, even their headquarters, the brains behind the war. And we wanted to project the war into the homes of America's families, because we knew that most of them had nothing against us. In short, we sought a decisive victory that would persuade America to renounce the war.¹

Vo Nguyen Giap, 1990

Introduction

In an interview with journalist Stanley Karnow in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in 1990, Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap described the goals for the Tet offensive of 1968. The goal of this paper is to determine why General Giap and the other leaders in Hanoi thought January 1968 was the right time to launch the major offensive of Tet 1968 and why that decision was an incorrect one based on the North Vietnamese strategy of dau tranh.

¹"Giap Remembers," NYTimes: 57.

As was seen in Chapter Two, due to the nature of dau tranh, political factors greatly influenced the decision to unsuccessfully attempt to transition to phase three of dau tranh in 1951. Political questions that shall be answered in order to piece the 1968 puzzle together are: What happened to the key players from mid-1966 to July 1967? Why did the North Vietnamese Politburo decide in July 1967 to transition to a general offensive? Did the North Vietnamese believe the South Vietnam was growing stronger or weaker? Did North Vietnam believe one good push would cause South Vietnam to collapse? Did North Vietnam believe this was their last chance for another four years to influence the political developments in the United States? Were there other pressures from within North Vietnam that caused its leaders to risk so much in one push? What impact or significance did Hanoi place on these events and situations?

Due to the limited scope of this paper, the Soviet Union and China situations were not analyzed in as much detail as the United States, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam situations. However, their political and military situations had a great impact upon both the United States and North Vietnam and, therefore, an overview is provided below.

The Political Situation in the Soviet Union and China

The Soviets wished to reestablish the Sino-Soviet alliance broken in 1958 by Mao's "Great Leap Forward," by exploiting the existing tension in Southeast Asia. Soviet leaders believed if they could cause an increase in American military activity in Vietnam, the North Vietnamese would request increased aid and thus become militarily stronger and more of a threat to China's southern border. In addition, the Soviets increased the number of troops on the Soviet-Sino border in 1967. These developments, the Russia hoped, would cause Mao to realign China with the Soviet Union.²

The Soviet Union was also willing to push its interests in Vietnam with the world community. In mid-February 1967, Britain's Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, discussed with Aleksei Kosygin, his Soviet counterpart, the possibility of convincing the North Vietnamese to compromise in the peace negotiation. Kosygin, after being rebuffed by both North Vietnam and the United States, left London for the Soviet Union, after warning the United States that any escalation would lead to greater Communist aid to North Vietnam. A joint British-Soviet statement issued at the conclusion of the Wilson-Kosygin talks on 13 February stated both nations pledged to "make every possible effort" to

²F. Charles Parker, "Vietnam and the Soviet Asian Strategy." (Research Report: US Army Institute for Advanced Russian and East European Studies, 1977), 1.

achieve peace and agreed to "maintain contact."³ This sent a political message to China that Russia was involved in the negotiation process and was not concerned with protecting the interests of China during this process.⁴

In 1967 the US-South Vietnamese military-political success, combined with an internal struggle within China (for power between Mao, the Chinese People's Liberation Army, and the nationalists) both proved to be the impetus for the Soviets to provide massive support to the North Vietnamese for the Tet offensive.⁵ By providing the North Vietnamese with military support, Russia could put pressure on China and at the same time, weaken the United States, economically, politically, and militarily. Through politically at odds, neither China nor Russia wanted an armed conflict and both wanted to further communism in the world, they therefore cooperated to some extent to provide aid to North Vietnam. However, the dollar amount of aid from Russia was about four times that of China and in an overall context of assistance, Russia supplied about one half the assistance while China and Eastern Europe supplied the other half. In dollar amounts the Soviet military assistance rose from approximately \$230 million in 1965 to

³Lester A. Sobel, ed., South Vietnam. Vol 2: U.S.-Comm. Confrontation in Southeast Asia, (New York: Facts on File, 1973), 268.

⁴Karnow, Vietnam, 495-496.

⁵Parker, "Vietnam," 12.

approximately \$670 million in 1966 and was estimated at \$800 million.⁶ This military aid, in the form of SAM-2 missiles, AFU series anti-aircraft guns, S-60 57mm anti-aircraft guns, and about 15 percent of the small arms (the rest of the VC small arms were supplied by China),⁷ was sent from Russia, via Chinese railroad⁸ and transport ship, to the Vietcong, as well as to Hanoi. Up until the time it was reported in a *Washington Post* article published in October 1967, Russia had stated its aid was going only to the North Vietnamese, and not to the NLF within South Vietnam.⁹ This aid, as well as the Soviets policy not to hinder the U.S. military deployment into Vietnam by any international initiatives, kept pressure on the Chinese.¹⁰

In 1967, in addition to increased aid, Russian-Vietnamese ties became stronger as shown by widely publicized diplomatic functions. As reported by the *Vietnamese News Agency of Hanoi*, Nguyen Van Dong, Acting Head of the Permanent Representation of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation (NFLSVN) in the Soviet Union held a reception

⁶MACV, "Command History 1967, Volume 1," (Saigon: Military History Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, September 1968), 19.

⁷MACV, "Command History 1967," 21.

⁸Ibid., 7.

⁹"VC Aide Acknowledge Moscow Sends Help," The Washington Post. 29 October 1967.

¹⁰Parker, "Vietnam," 1.

to honor the Vietnamese "winter-spring victory" of 1966-1967.¹¹ Nguyen publicly expressed thanks to the Soviet Union for their support of the NFLSVN political program and increased Soviet aid to help implement the program.¹² This assistance came in the form of training of MiG pilots and missile crews, and an undisclosed amount of industrial and military support beyond the gift of 100 new MiG-17, MiG-19 and MiG-21 types, which would put the total of North Vietnamese MiG aircraft at 200.¹³

China, on the other hand, made Ho and Giap very nervous. In addition to an almost traditional interest in dominating Southeast Asia, for almost 1000 years (from 111 BC to 939 AD) China controlled Vietnam. Vietnam was important to China because of its location for trade.¹⁴

Mao took a cautious approach to the war within Vietnam. He did not favor a peaceful settlement with the South Vietnamese, therefore, he encouraged the Vietnamese communists to continue fighting the American imperialists. He did not want, however, the war to expand to the point where he could be forced to provide direct, large-scale

¹¹"South Vietnam NFL Representation in Soviet Union Gives Reception." Vietnamese News Agency, Hanoi. 27 June 1967.

¹²"NFLSV Leader Thanks USSR for Program Support." Vietnamese News Agency, Hanoi. 9 November 1967.

¹³Sobel, South Vietnam, 249.

¹⁴F. Charles Parker. Vietnam Strategy for a Stalemate (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 45.

Chinese intervention.¹⁵ However, from 1965-1967 China provided Hanoi with political-military support which greatly influenced the United States's development of strategy for the war in Vietnam. China consistently threatened to enter the conflict with North Vietnam if the United States escalated the war.¹⁶

After requests from Ho Chi Minh, in early 1965 the People's Republic of China (PRC) deployed soldiers to North Vietnam. According to Alen Whiting, director of the Office of Research and Analysis-Far East in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research from 1965-1966, the PRC began moving soldiers into North Vietnam in 1965 and by 1966 had 50,000, most of whom manned the extensive anti-aircraft batteries that ringed the city, and to a lesser degree, carried out logistical work and repaired bomb damage. They remained there until March 1968, after President Johnson deescalated the bombing of North Vietnam. However, this fact was not known to the United States until the 1970's.¹⁷ Had the U.S. known China had limited its action to military assistance and limited troop deployments

¹⁵Karnow, Vietnam, 452-453.

¹⁶John W. Garver, "The Chinese Threat in the Vietnam War." (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, Spring 1992), 77.

¹⁷John Schlight, ed., The Second Indochina War: Proceedings of a Symposium Held at Airlie Virginia, 7-9 November 1984 (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1986), 109.

within North Vietnam, it may have pursued a more dramatic military and political solution to the Vietnam war.

On 2 February 1966, the communist Chinese government lent legitimacy to the NFLSVN, the provincial communist government set up in South Vietnam during a NCNA Peking news broadcast. The message stated the Vietnamese would not come to the negotiation table unless U.S. troops were withdrawn completely from South Vietnam and was acknowledged by the United States government.¹⁸ On 16 June 1967, *Radio Peking* quoted Premier Zhou Enlai as saying the only legitimate government of South Vietnam was the NLF.¹⁹ It seems odd it took from February 1966 until June 1967 for China to join the sixteen other countries of the world in acknowledging the NFLSVN. China may have been cautiously awaiting a military resolution, as the VC and the NVA were getting defeated on the military battlefield from 1965-1967. As the bombing continued in the North and the ground war persisted in consuming the Vietcong resources in the South, Ho was forced to either follow Peking in resisting the peace overtures of the United States or follow Russia and negotiate a settlement. China publicly condemned Russia for pushing for peace talks. In the Peking NCNA, on 3 January 1967, a leading member of the Kwangtung Provincial

¹⁸"Peking: Viet Cong Must Talk for South," Japan Times, 28 February 1966.

¹⁹"Peking Gives Recognition to NLF's New Gov't," Japan Times, 16 June 1967.

Revolutionary Council denounced the Soviet government for pushing for peaceful negotiations.²⁰ In February, the *United Press International News Service* carried a pledge by Lin Piao, the Red Chinese Defense Minister, of China's support for the Vietcong. It stated, "China was prepared to 'pay the greatest sacrifices' to help the Communist forces achieve final victory in the Vietnam war."²¹ This implied massive troop deployments to assist North Vietnam. To add yet another twist to this political drama, China entered the nuclear age in June 1967 with its first successful hydrogen bomb explosion. Even though China did not possess the delivery system to deploy the weapon, this event further fed United States' fears of China's intervention into the war. This breakthrough was not taken lightly by the Vietnamese. Acclamations were broadcast from the NLFSVN to Chairman Mao on 20 June 1967, offering "warmest congratulations" to the "fraternal Chinese people." The message went on to say this breakthrough should be heeded by the U.S. and provided encouragement to the South Vietnamese people in their struggle against the American imperialists.²²

²⁰"South Vietnam People's Delegation Welcomed in Kwangchow," *NCNA*, Kwangchow, China, 3 January 1967, Indochina Collection.

²¹"China's Pledge to Vietcong," *China MP*, 15 February 1967. Indochina Collection.

²²"South Vietnam National Liberation Front President Acclaims Successful Explosion of China's First Hydrogen Bomb." *Peking NCNA International Service*, 20 June 1967. Indochina Collection.

In another message carried by the *Peking NCNA International Service*, Tran Nhu Trung, head of the Military Council of the Central Committee of the NLFSVN, said this event had "strengthened the national defense of the Chinese people and was a tremendous encouragement to the South Vietnamese army and people."²³ Carried by the *United Press International and Associated Press*, this message was another dig at the United States, like a small child pointing out the strength of his big brother to the playground bully.

The political wrangling between China and the Soviet Union put the North Vietnamese leadership on a tightrope. The North Vietnamese recognized the opportunities this war provided to Russia, but Ho could not afford to antagonize either China or Russia. He needed the ammunition and small arms and the Chinese railways for shipping massive amounts of Soviet war materiel to North Vietnam. Ho also wanted to be able to play on the United States fears that China would enter the war with large scale troop deployments, if provoked by the United States' military actions in Vietnam.²⁴

Faced with the political power-plays of Russia and China, Ho continued to fight in South Vietnam to please the

²³"Lin Piao Receives Message of Greetings from Military Council Head of SVNFL on Successful Explosion of China's first Hydrogen Bomb," Peking NCNA International Service. 20 June 1967, Indochina Collection.

²⁴N. Khac Huyen, Vision Accomplished: The Enigma of Ho Chi Minh (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1971), 302.

Chinese and at the same time, made peace talk overtures to please the Russians. He did not succeed in pleasing both of his communist brothers and in early 1967, Mao Tse-Tung made *Ho persona non grata* for wanting to conduct negotiations and for refusing, in Mao's eyes, to "fight to the end until final victory is achieved."²⁵

The Soviets sat back and watched. No matter what the outcome of the Vietnam conflict, they would also win. If the North Vietnamese succeeded in winning battles (or even the war) the Chinese would be nervous of the obvious strength of the North Vietnamese Army. If the United States won battles or the war, the Chinese would be even more likely to come back to the Soviets. Even a stalemate promised (in the Soviet thinking) more troops deployed from the United States, and therefore a nervous Chinese government.

United States Political Issues

Meanwhile in the United States, the political situation was experiencing turbulence. A number of democratic senators - Morse, Church, McGovern, and Fulbright - were already outspoken opponents to the war. In March 1967 the US Congress approved more than 32.8 billion dollars for military procurement appropriation. As announced on 10 March 1967, in one week two-hundred and thir' American

²⁵Ibid., 304.

were killed in action, and an additional 1,385 either wounded or MIA. This was the highest ever weekly count of American casualties.²⁶

As the costs of the war grew, in political as well as economic and social, President Johnson, along with the American public, grew more and more disillusioned. He related in his book The Vantage Point:

The last three months of 1967 had produced the largest deficit in our balance of payments since 1950. Our proposal for a tax bill was bottled up in ongress. The international monetary system was in danger. At the same time I was trying to push my domestic program. I submitted my Economic Report to the Congress on February 1 and followed it with a program of major legislation in education, crime prevention, and consumer protection.²⁷

Johnson's domestic program, the "Great Society," was designed to attack the long-neglected problems of poverty, racial injustice, inadequate education, and urban blight.²⁸ But it was publicized that this program was being starved for lack of funds that were being funneled instead into the Vietnam war. The American blacks, whose hopes had been raised by President Johnson's promises for a war against poverty, had begun looting, rioting, and burning in the cities.²⁹

²⁶Schandler, Unmaking, 49.

²⁷Lyndon Baines Johnson, The Vantage Point, (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1971), 385.

²⁸Anthony Austin, The President's War (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1971), 50.

²⁹Ibid., 206.

In a statistical analysis of monthly data from January 1965 to December 1967 comparing the approval ratings of President Johnson as presented by the American Institute of Public Opinion's "Gallup Poll" showed the more US troops and supplies sent to Vietnam in one month and the more combat in which the troops were engaged, the less support the president received the next month.³⁰ This was the result of more and more people being exposed to the war as more and more soldiers were drafted and sent to Vietnam, and the press continuing to report on the losses, day by day.

As the United States election year of 1968 drew near, and with peace negotiations at a stalemate, the Hanoi leaders kept abreast of the United States political situation via television, radio, and the print media. In Big Victory, Great Task, Giap mentioned reading in *U.S. News and World Report* 14 August 1967 edition the United States political system was faltering in support of the war effort. His grasp of the situation was:

. . .that war, racial conflict, the growing budget deficit, and troubles with the Congress, with the allies, and with the dollar are bad news, putting pressure on the government from all directions. Suddenly, the situation at the White House has become like that of a building whose roof is about to cave in.³¹

³⁰Jeffrey S. Milstein, Dynamics of the Vietnam War: A Quantitative Analysis and Predictive Computer Situation (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), 54-55.

³¹*Ibid.*, 97.

The North Vietnamese may have discussed using the United States election to their advantage, as a communist victory before the election would make it impossible for the Johnson administration to authorize more American troops for South Vietnam. A North Vietnamese victory might also force President Johnson to seek negotiation on terms advantageous to North Vietnam, particularly the cessation of bombing North Vietnam, and if not the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, at least *status quo* on the number of soldiers deployed to South Vietnam. But even though the leaders in Hanoi were very interested in the political situation in the United States, they had enough knowledge in the political system of the United States to know that bold policy decisions were rarely made during an election year. They did not indicate any great faith that the political situation, after the election, would be very different.

However their cause would be assisted if they could convince the U.S. people, through military or political means, to vote for a "peace candidate." As related in Vo Nguyen Giap's book Big Victory, Great Task, written in 1967:

Our people hold forth that after forthcoming Presidential elections in the United States, and despite a possible change of Presidents, the U.S. imperialists' aggressive policy cannot be changed in nature. The U.S. Presidential elections constitute but a distributing of hierarchies among the personalities of the parties of the ruling capitalist class in the United States. Of course, through the forthcoming elections, the American people will better realize the errors and setbacks of the Johnson Administration in the aggressive

war in Viet-Nam. And so, the struggle of the American people against the aggressive war will be stronger.³²

In the fall of 1967, Wilfred Burchett, the Australian Communist reporter who served as North Vietnam's mouthpiece to the West during the war, reported a member of the North Vietnamese Politburo did not have faith in the elections leading to an earlier settlement of the war, but relied instead on their own military and political forces.³³

During 1967 the US government felt intelligence revealed an increase in Soviet influence in Hanoi and a shift in the DRV's view that victory in the South was at hand.³⁴ To counter this optimism, Presidential Aide, Walt Rostow commented if Russia or China became directly involved in the war on a large scale, he predicted a fast reverse in this trend. Therefore the Johnson administration continued to tread lightly.³⁵

Internally, the Johnson administration was embroiled in a battle with the military concerning the bombing of North Vietnam. Concerned with world opinion and support for the war within the United States, initially (through 1966) the Johnson administration would only agree to the bombing

³²Vo Nguyen Giap, Victory, 56.

³³Wilfred G. Burchett, Vietnam North (New York: International Publishers, 1966), 49.

³⁴Larry Berman, Lyndon Johnson's War: The Road to Stalemate in Vietnam (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 104-105.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 10.

of limited minor military targets located south of the 19th parallel. President Johnson, his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, and various civilian advisors personally selected these bombing missions. This included decisions on the targets to be hit, the size and type of munition to be used, and number of planes to be employed against the target. In June 1966 targets included the oil depots on the fringes of Hanoi and Haiphong and that bombing effort drew world wide debate concerning the limits of the war. The Christian Science Monitor reported Prime Minister Harold Wilson of Great Britain "disassociated his government from the Johnson bombing" and the "President's basic purpose of ending the stalemate and bringing the war to the negotiating table are being restated on all sides."³⁶ This loss of staunch supporter Great Britain was no doubt relished by the Vietnamese and sorely missed by the Johnson administration.

It is generally thought (especially by the military) the weak and ineffectual execution of Rolling Thunder forced the commitment of additional United States ground combat troops.

In part due to a dissatisfaction concerning the conduct of Rolling Thunder, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, a trusted member of the Johnson administration, resigned from his position in October 1967. He told Presi-

³⁶"Hanoi-Haiphong bombing ignites worldwide debate." The Christian Science Monitor. 30 June 1966.

dent Johnson the Vietnamese war was "dangerous, costly, and unsatisfactory to our people." It had become clear to McNamara the United States lacked a clear goal for Vietnam. He saw the U.S. economy suffering, already burdened with the economic task of assisting with the rebuilding of Europe and domestic economic problems, trying to support the war effort in Vietnam. Mr. McNamara was also unhappy about the degradation of the military strength in Europe that was necessary in order to provide the current military structure in Vietnam.³⁷

The international scene showed some interesting support of the United States' position. Lebanon, going against its neighbors, the United Arab Republic, Algeria and Syria, went on record on 13 October 1966 supporting the United States' involvement, citing the North Vietnamese's non-compliance with the Geneva Peace Accords of 1954.³⁸ South Yemen recognized it on that same day but Indonesia refused to recognize the NLF as the legitimate government of South Vietnam until the Paris peace talks reached a decision on the matter.³⁹

³⁷Roger L. Purcell "A Description and Analysis of the Sieges of Dien Bien Phu and Khe Sanh." (Research Paper: US Air War College, 1986), 18.

³⁸"U.S. Stand on Vietnam Supported by Lebanon." Los Angeles Times. 13 October 1966.

³⁹"Peking Gives Recognition." Japan Times. 16 June 1967.

South Vietnam's Political Issues

Within South Vietnam, popular confidence seemed to be influenced by the promise of a national election. Using the study presented in Dynamics of the Vietnam War, the South Vietnamese popular confidence varied during the 1965-1967 escalatory period of the war. It rose sharply in July 1965, when American troops first began their offensive operations in South Vietnam, then generally dropped off until it reached a low in May 1966. It rose slowly again until it reached another high point in August 1967, just prior to the national elections.⁴⁰

The national elections, held on 3 September 1967, proved to be a concern for the North Vietnamese. In spite of trying to disrupt the voting with threats and instances of violence, over 83 percent of the South Vietnamese people went to the polls and elected a new president, vice president, and national government. In October representatives to the South Vietnamese Lower House were also elected through national elections, for the first time since early in the Diem regime, the villagers and hamlets held elections. These were the first elections held under the constitution written by the Constitutional Assembly whose members had been elected by popular vote in 1966.⁴¹

⁴⁰Milstein, Dynamics, 65.

⁴¹"Vietnam through Foreign Eyes: The World Press Appraises Vietnam's National Elections under the New Constitution," Saigon, 1967, 1-2. Echols Collection.

The national election winner, General Nguyen Van Thieu, the figurehead chief of state, and Prime Minister Nguyen Van Ky received only 35 percent of the popular vote. Truong Dinh Dzu, an obscure civilian, received the second place share with 17 percent of the total vote campaigning on a platform of "restoring peace and ending the war." This was also the National Liberation Front's political line and this support for Truong Dinh Dzu was seen by the communists to be significant.⁴²

Even though these results demonstrated some instability in the government which was encouraging to the communists, those results were also disturbing. North Vietnam leaders realized in spite of attempting to disrupt the polling, only three polling places out of the 8,808 stations had to be closed down due to Vietcong activity and 83 percent of the South Vietnamese voiced their opinion.⁴³ And the communists, as well as the rest of the world realized, had the elections been rigged for the Thieu/Ky ticket, the results would have been much higher.

The polling was witnessed by over 500 journalists from throughout the world⁴⁴ and the published comments from the journalists were generally for the South Vietnamese government. For example, a journalist from Lima, Peru

⁴²Karnow, History, 451.

⁴³"Foreign Eyes," 2.

⁴⁴Ibid.

stated, "It was a blow to the communists and a tangible demonstration that their popularity is more seeming than real."⁴⁵ And from Stockholm, Sweden, "Even if the election result must be taken with many grains of salt it can still be credited with greater worth as a measure of opinion than seemed likely only two weeks ago."⁴⁶ World press was giving the South Vietnamese government credibility and legitimacy, thus eroding the NLF's claim on the government.

North Vietnam's Political Issues

The political situation in North Vietnam also showed signs of turmoil. The average age of the political leadership of North Vietnam was 59 years. Most had been fighting for 30 years, and though old age and rigidity do not necessarily go together, fighting seemed to be the only way of life they knew.⁴⁷ Ho Chi Minh was 77 years old and his health was faltering. He died in 1969. It was felt by many in Ho's circle of friends and confidants, that Ho's decision to argue for allowing the French to occupy Vietnam for a five year period in order to provide the infrastructure for

⁴⁵Ibid., 3.

⁴⁶Ibid., 16.

⁴⁷Brian M. Jenkins, "Why the North Vietnamese will keep fighting" (Contract Study: Rand Corporation, 1971), 10.

Vietnam until Vietnamese could be trained to provide those functions. This agreement was called the Cochinchina Agreement and it,

. . . was to obsess him for the rest of his life and made his ambition to reunify Vietnam almost compulsive during his last years. Communist troops were told that the Tet offensive of 68 was a campaign to "liberate" the south before Ho's death.⁴⁸

In another indication of turmoil, Deputy Prime Minister, Truong Chinh, urged the government to stick together through this war and argued for a strong, consistent government, saying, "the more we 'reform the government', the more we show our spinelessness and make concessions, the more the enemy will exert pressure on us."⁴⁹ This argument seemed to be in response to problems experienced in the Politburo and within the communist leadership of North Vietnam in general.

For even within the totalitarian government of North Vietnam, all of the communist leadership did not support the war. In September 1967, 200 party members were arrested and charged with dissension. North Vietnam imposed a new law that same month imposing severe punishment on anti-war crimes such as spying, sabotage, and opposition to the war.⁵⁰ As the decision had just been made to transition

⁴⁸Karnow, History, 155.

⁴⁹Truong Chinh, Primer, 202.

⁵⁰Wilbur Morrison, The Elephant and the Tiger (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990), 372.

to the offensive during Tet, these dissenters could have vocalized their opposition to that decision.

In early January 1968, a political commissar assigned to one of the Vietcong's principle headquarters stated there was a "growing belief among communist leaders that a protracted war would cause them unacceptable losses and might end in their regime's collapse." But he also said the North Vietnamese believed the South Vietnamese people would be receptive to a general offensive and would rise up against the Americans and their puppet government in South Vietnam.⁵¹

Peace Negotiations

Numerous proposals for peace negotiations were proposed by both sides in 1966 and 1967. South Vietnam, a "Facts on File" Publication, describes twenty-two different peace proposals put forth by international figures from the Pope, to Britain's Foreign Secretary George Brown, to the United States President and Congressmen, to U. Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, all to no avail.⁵² North Vietnam clung to an unconditional withdrawal of all United States military from Vietnam while the United States insisted North Vietnam withdraw all of its

⁵¹Ibid., 373-374.

⁵²Sobel, ed., South Vietnam, 4-73.

forces from South Vietnam and stay out. This lack of meaningful dialogue continued into 1967.⁵³

The intensification of the fighting in Vietnam continued during 1967 which may have caused Hanoi to drop hints that it might be willing to start peace talks. Both sides started to clarify their terms: North Vietnam insisted on a U.S. halt in bombings and other acts of war as its conditions for negotiation; the U.S. refused to stop bombing without the North Vietnamese responding militarily as well.⁵⁴

For example, on 2 February 1967 President Johnson sent a letter to Ho Chi Minh saying both leaders "have a heavy obligation to seek earnestly the path to peace," and that he was:

. . . prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of United States forces in South Vietnam, as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and by sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both sides would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.⁵⁵

Ho responded to President Johnson's letter on 15 February 1967, saying the only way peace would come to Vietnam was for the unconditional withdrawal of U.S. forces

⁵³Ibid., 75.

⁵⁴Ibid., 251.

⁵⁵US Senate Republican Policy Committee, The Text of the Controversial Republican White Paper: The War in Vietnam (Washington DC: Public Affairs Press, 1967), 53-54.

and for the U.S. to "let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs." Ho would consider talking about peace only AFTER "the unconditional cessation of the U.S. bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV."⁵⁶ This refusal for either side to bend would carry on until after the Tet offensive.

On 28 March 1967, Mr. U Thant, United Nations Secretary General, appealed to the DRV in a new three-point peace formula. The first step of this plan called for a general truce which would halt **ALL** military activities by all sides. Then preliminary talks by the United States and North Vietnam could begin, mediated by either Britain or the Soviet Union who were co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Convention or mediated by Canada, India, and Poland as the International Control Commission for Vietnam. The Geneva Conference would reconvene as the final step toward peace with both South and North Vietnam governments in attendance. Hanoi rebuffed this plan. President Johnson's administration considered this a world-wide opinion poll windfall; Hanoi rejecting the United Nations plan the U.S. heartily endorsed.⁵⁷

On 1 May 1967, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk publicly denounced the North Vietnamese for rejecting at least 28 different peace proposals which had been forwarded

⁵⁶Ibid., 54-56.

⁵⁷Ibid., 56.

by the United States or different nations around the world. He further stated the U.S. would agree to Hanoi's demands to unconditionally halt air raids on North Vietnam if North Vietnam agreed to reduce "their half of the war." And later that month, President Johnson and Premier Kosygin discussed the Vietnam issue in New Jersey, and however cordial, the meeting did not result in any agreements.⁵⁸

Apparently since the decision had already been made to conduct the Tet offensive, the DRVN made some overtures toward peace in the fall of 1967, probably in an attempt to relieve some of the military pressure to provide for a better chance of success during the offensive. These overtures included reports through the French press in Saigon and a speech by North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong on 30 August which stated "talks could begin two to three weeks after the U.S. ceased its bombing."⁵⁹ The cessation of bombing for two to three weeks would have provided time for the North Vietnamese to logistically prepare for a major offensive.

The last "peace talk" communique, from North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, on 30 December 1967, said the North Vietnamese "will talk" after the bombing had unconditionally ceased. This statement was

⁵⁸Sobel, ed., South Vietnam, 270-290.

⁵⁹Ibid., 300.

passed through the French press and broadcast in English over Hanoi's international shortwave radio system.⁶⁰

Knowing the North Vietnamese had already decided to launch the general offensive on 30 January 1968 during the Tet cease fire, this ploy to "talk" seemed to be just another example of the North Vietnamese ability to use deception in war-a key to oriental strategy. Mao Tse-Tung, paraphrasing Sun Tzu, said war demands deception. Giap used some type of deception or surprise before or during every major offensive he conducted.⁶¹

The Political Decision to Transition

The National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam got restless in 1967, in a large part due to the annihilation of their soldiers by the U.S. and South Vietnamese troops and firepower. On 15 March 1967 some of this impatience for a quick resolution to the war was seen in the text of a Soviet TASS interview with Nguyen Van Dong, acting head of the NFLSV delegation in the USSR. Nguyen Van Dong stated:

In view of the even greater escalation of the war by the United States, testifying to its stubbornness and aggressive nature, there is no other way for the people

⁶⁰Eye, "Generalship," 39.

⁶¹Ryan, "Operational Art," 17.

of South Vietnam than to rally their ranks even more closely, to hold the weapons firmly in their hands, and to annihilate the enemy.⁶²

The Lao Dong Party (Vietnamese Communist) Central Committee in April 1967, adopted Resolution 13, urging their forces to seek "a decisive victory in South Vietnam in the shortest time possible."⁶³ This should be compared to the Lao Dong Party Central Committee meeting held in 1960, which urged its followers to "continue to resolutely carry the banner of the people's cause forward."⁶⁴ It is evident by the comparison of these two resolutions the Lao Dong Party was getting impatient with the conduct of the war and wanted a solution. Le Duan, Secretary General of the Lao Dong Party, who later replaced Ho Chi Minh as leader of the Party, pushed mightily for the Tet offensive on a philosophy of "one big push and get it over."⁶⁵

According the Philip Davidson, in his 1990 book Secrets of the Vietnam War, Southerner Dong, and Northerners Giap and Truong Chinh opposed the move to a general offensive arguing the Communists in the South Vietnam had not progressed far enough militarily or politically to

⁶²"NFLSV Envoy in Moscow Gives TASS Interview," PRAVDA, 15 March 1967.

⁶³N. Khac Huyen, Vision, 305.

⁶⁴Ibid., 285.

⁶⁵F. P. Serong, The Future of South Vietnam, (New York: National Strategy Information Center, Inc., 1971), 20.

support this final phase.⁶⁶ In reading General Giap's written work of 1967, Big Victory, Great Task, it seems apparent he thought the South was doing well in building up its political forces to enable the transition to the general offensive with the support of the masses. He wrote:

. . .the southern people have satisfactorily settled the relations between developing their political forces numerically and constantly improving their quality by broadening the all-people's great united bloc and firmly consolidating the key role of the worker-peasant alliance. Today, the southern people's political forces are very numerous and powerful. It is fitting to say that the 14 million southerners are closing their ranks and moving forward to attack the enemy through both military and political struggle.⁶⁷

And said:

The NLF of South Viet-Nam has been increasingly consolidated and enlarged and has continuously strengthened the people's political forces. The liberated areas have been enlarged and firmly consolidated. The political struggle movement has been widely developed. The people in the southern cities are rising up to struggle more and more fiercely against the U.S. aggressors and the country-selling Vietnamese traitors.⁶⁸

Research did not reveal any "fierce struggle" in the southern cities between the U.S. and the South Vietnamese. There were some reports of Buddhist peace rallies and student protests, but these were for the most part peaceful demonstrations normal in a democratic society.

⁶⁶Davidson, Secrets, 22.

⁶⁷Giap, Victory, 75.

⁶⁸Ibid., 89.

As recounted by Douglas Pike in his book War Peace and the Viet Cong, by 1967 the ratio of allocation of resources and man-days expended on political dau tranh and military dau tranh was 2:1 as opposed to 10:1 in 1959-1963.⁶⁹ This reduction in political dau tranh was an indication the North Vietnamese were becoming more and more convinced their political struggle was coming to fruition. As discussed in Chapter Two, the dau tranh strategic model stated as the nation was readying to transition into phase three, the political arm gave over most of its time and power resources to the armed struggle arm of power.

Therefore it seemed Giap believed the Vietcong had been able to accomplish their political indoctrination of the local populace and the Southerners were ready to rise up in support of the North Vietnamese cause when the time was right. Giap was quoted in his 1967 book Big Victory, Great Task, as saying,

In the light of the political program recently proclaimed by the front, the heroic southern people will certainly develop vigorously all their potential capabilities and their offensive thrust, step up their armed and political struggle, develop the great people's war to a new degree and completely defeat the U.S. aggressors and their lackeys.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Douglas Pike, War, Peace and the Vietcong, (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969), 117-118.

⁷⁰Giap, Victory, 105.

The political program he spoke of was probably the already mentioned resolution made by the Lao Dong party to conduct a general offensive.

Summary

By July 1967, the political situation seemed against the North Vietnamese. Russia was pushing for something to happen, either peace or an escalation of the war. The Chinese wanted a victory by the North Vietnamese without direct intervention by Chinese combat troops. Even though the United States political arena was losing the confidence of the American people and the President was becoming disillusioned with the Vietnam war, this process was going slowly and the upcoming 1968 elections would probably not significantly change the political platform toward the war.

South Vietnam's government seemed to be gaining the confidence of the people and the recent elections demonstrated a lack of control over the people by the Vietcong. North Vietnam's politburo was growing old and their venerable "Uncle Ho's" health was failing. Dissention with the protracted war scenario was growing in both the COSVN and within the leadership of North Vietnam. By refusing to participate in United Nations peace proposals the North Vietnamese had cut themselves off from international support. Politically, North Vietnam could see no way to continue in phase two of dau tranh.

CHAPTER FOUR
MILITARY ISSUES

Do not put a premium on killing. . . . Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy. . . .¹

Sun Tzu

Now I do not see any end to the war in sight. It's going to be a question of putting maximum pressure on the enemy anywhere and everywhere we can. We will have to grind him down. In effect, we are fighting a war of attrition, and the only alternative is a war of annihilation, which I think we have ruled out as a matter of policy.²

General William Westmoreland, April 1967

Introduction

The military issues facing the Vietcong and North Vietnamese leadership in 1967 were many and varied. The leaders' biggest worry was the loss of the military initiative and the subsequent lack of military success during the past two years. In addition they were faced with a lack of recruits from the South, attrition of their forces, and a loss of territory.

¹Sun Tzu, The Art of War Trans. Samuel B. Griffith, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 77.

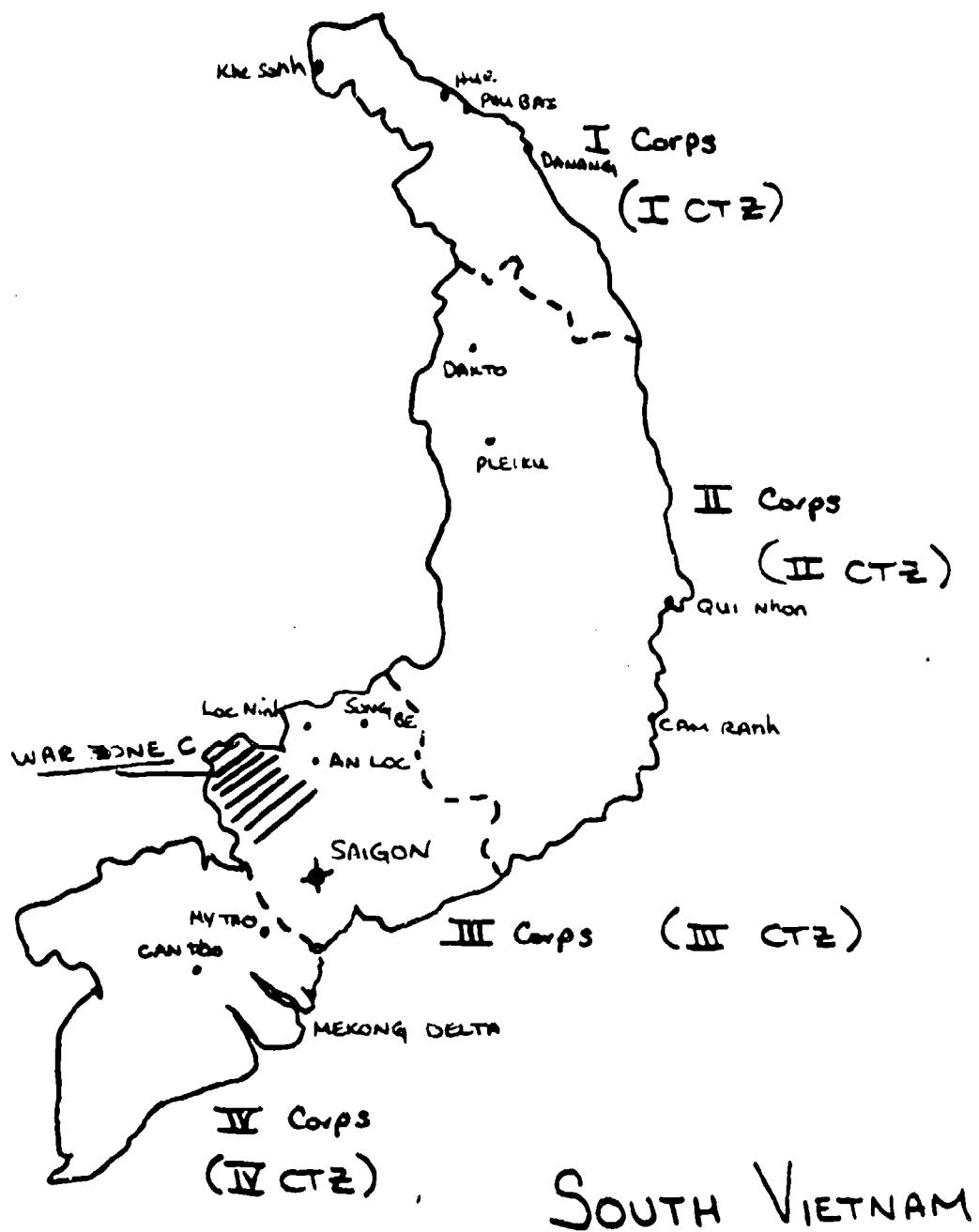
²General William C. Westmoreland, answering questions at the Associated Press Managing Editors' lunch at the Waldorf Astoria, NY, April 24, 1967. Westmoreland files, 3.

Military Operations - 1966

Throughout 1966, the NVA and VC suffered loss after loss. A U.S. Army Advisory Group debriefing from August 1965 to January 1968 provided an example of this military situation. In it, BG William R. Desobry, advisor for IV Combat Tactical Zone (CTZ) (see map page 110), related that 1966 was the year the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) gained and held the initiative in the IV CTZ. Through May 1966 the ARVN killed an average of 100 VC per month. In June and July the VC refused battle, but the tempo again picked up in August and continued along the same lines as the spring totals. In 1967, the ARVN and U.S. within IV CTZ began working on the pacification and revolutionary development programs. The battles followed the same pattern as 1966 until late November when the fighting sharply increased. The VC lost 2013 in the month of December to the 600 friendly losses.³

Another example of the United States and South Vietnamese coalition force success came from a very optimistic, LTG Larsen, Commander, II US Field Force. He reported in July 1967 that within the II Corps Tactical Zone (Central Highlands area, see map 1, page 109) during 1966 and 1967 the enemy never even initiated a major operation.

³William R. Desobry, "Debriefing Report of BG. William R. Desobry, August 1965 - January 1968," (APO 96215, South Vietnam: Headquarters, US Army Advisory Group, IV CTZ, 1 January 1968), 2.



MAP 1: South Vietnam

The US and Free World Military Armed Forces in II Corps Tactical Zone thwarted every major scheme of maneuver prior to its execution and succeeded in inflicting severe casualties on the North Vietnamese and Vietcong.⁴ The report went on to state the enemy's,

. . .hard core units are suffering wherever they are. His replacement of personnel has not been able to keep pace with his losses. Current figures indicate that the cross over point has been reached in II Corps Tactical Zone; i.e., that he is now losing more personnel than he can replenish. Nowhere is there evidence that his morale is high.⁵

Giap was losing forces throughout South Vietnam, not just in II and IV CTZ. In the III CTZ (vicinity of Saigon, see map page 106), U.S. Army operation **Masher** conducted in January 1966 resulted in the 1st Cavalry Division capturing 633 VC, killing 1,342, and holding numerous suspected VC. When follow-on operation **Thayer** ended in late October 1966, another 1,000 VC were reported dead.⁶

In addition to the ground war, the air campaign, specifically employment of bombing operation **Rolling Thunder** continued during 1966. The military targeted military training camps, supply depots, rail and road bridges, and all forms of transportation, to include public utilities,

⁴"Senior Officer Debriefing Report (RCS-CSFOR-74)." (APO 96350, I Field Force Vietnam, 31 July 1967), 5.

⁵Ibid., 5-6.

⁶Davidson, Vietnam, 404.

and North Vietnam's small factory system.⁷ The U.S. added more targets in the vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong, such as oil depots, were included in the approved list in June 1966. After late 1966 a change in policy allowed for more bombing with a renewed effort to make the civilian populace feel the attacks on military targets.⁸

Military Statistics - Early 1967

By the beginning of 1967, according to the United States Military Assistance Command operating in Saigon, the United States Army,

...had deployed 244,712 personnel in RVN. Principle combat forces were the 1st Inf Div, 1st Cav Div (AM) [air mobile], 4th Inf Div, and 25th Inf Div, each with nine infantry battalions (the 4th Inf Div and 25th Inf Div each contained a tank battalion, the 9th Inf Div was partially deployed with six battalions in-country). There were two separate airborne brigades--the 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div, and the 173d Abn Bde--deployed in country, as well as two separate light infantry battalions.

Additionally, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) was deployed with three cavalry squadrons. Supporting these units were 38 field artillery battalions, including 25-105mm howitzer battalions and three battalions each of 155mm howitzers, 155 eight-inch howitzers, and 175mm guns, plus the aerial rocket battalion, unique to the 1st Cav Div (AM) [air mobile]. There were four air defense artillery battalions, 16 combat engineer battalions, seven engineer construction battalions, and

⁷Gerald Gold, Allan M. Siegal, and Samuel Abt, eds., The Pentagon Papers (New York: Panam Books, Inc., 1971), 235.

⁸Mark Clodfelter, The Limits of Air Power, (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 127.

83 other type battalions in-country. Besides these, 56 aviation companies were deployed.⁹

Also by the beginning of 1967 the United States Marine Corps deployed the III Marine Amphibious Force consisting of 68,767 marines to include air and ground combat forces and a logistical support command.¹⁰ The US Navy and Coast Guard provided 23,260 advisors to the South Vietnamese Navy for barge, helicopter, close air support, engineer support, and riverine operations.¹¹

The United States Air Force built up forces rapidly in 1966 and by 1967 had 1,234 aircraft operating from both South Vietnam and Thailand to provide bombing, reconnaissance, search and rescue, and close air support.¹² Assisting with this massive military effort was the Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) consisting of soldiers from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, and the Philippines. However the total strength for the FWMAF never numbered more than 57,406.¹³

According to U.S. figures, General Giap, Commander of all NVA soldiers, at the start of 1967, had 280,000 main, regional, administrative, and political cadre forces

⁹USMACV, "Command History 1967, Vol 1," 135.

¹⁰Ibid., 159.

¹¹Ibid., 162-163.

¹²Ibid., 164.

¹³Olson, Dictionary, 165.

operating with guerrilla and mobile warfare tactics on the battlefields of South Vietnam.¹⁴ He faced almost double that total as the combined total of U.S., ARVN, and FWMAF forces described above numbered 404,145 soldiers, marines, and sailors. At the beginning of 1967, the North Vietnamese MiG aircraft fleet of approximately 80 aircraft faced over 1,200 U.S. Air Force planes. The North Vietnamese Air Force was patterned after the Soviet Air Defense Force however basic pilot training took place in China. The air force worked out of nine airfields in North Vietnam and losses were replaced quite rapidly, so that the operating inventory was kept quite constant.¹⁵

The Threat of More U.S. and Allied Soldiers

Not only did Giap have to contend with the forces already in South Vietnam, but the U.S. press continued to report on increases soon to come, sometimes erroneously. For example, on 15 March 1967 President Johnson met with his advisors to consider a recommendation from the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a scaled-down reserve call-up from 260,000 soldiers to 98,000. This reduction was due to optimistic feelings about the military situation in Vietnam. Before the President was able to meet with the Joint Chiefs, news

¹⁴MACV, "Command History, 1967, Vol 1," 426.

¹⁵Momyer, Gen. William W., Air Power in Three Wars (WWII, Korea, Vietnam) (Privately Published), 137.

reporters queried Press Secretary George Christian about "those 98,000 men who are going to Vietnam." The press inaccurately publicized the 98,000 soldier increase in the deployment to Vietnam, not realizing the U.S. Army would use those forces to bolster the strategic reserve in the United States.¹⁶ This report was understandably not good news to the North Vietnamese who saw the 1 to 1.44 troop ratio balloon to 1:1.8.

Also in March, General Westmoreland told the Commander In Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, that the optimum United States military force would be four and two-thirds full divisions, as opposed to the three full divisions worth of combat power currently deployed in Vietnam. With its supporting units, this optimum force would total 670,000 men, an addition to the 1967 ceiling by 200,000. The New York Times indicated in its 3 July 1967 article that the U.S. Army required partial mobilization of the reserves to fulfill this troop requirement even though those numbers were not agreed upon by CINCPAC. But in a budget address to Congress in August, President Johnson stated he planned to send an additional 45,000 troops to South Vietnam before October 1967.¹⁷ In October, Thailand agreed to provide 12,000 additional soldiers to the Free World Military Assistance force as soon

¹⁶Johnson, Vantage, 407.

¹⁷Schandler, Unmaking, 50 and 54.

as the United States provided them with arms and equipment.¹⁸ With the addition of these two groups of forces (45,000 U.S. and 12,000 Thai) deployed to Vietnam, the force ratio would be 1:1.65. By continuing to fight mobile warfare, according to the dau tranh model, attrition to Giap's forces would continue.

North Vietnam was watching these reports closely, as evidenced by an address to the American people made by Ho Chi Minh in January 1967. In a press release, he was correct to within 1,000 on the number of U.S. military personnel deployed to South Vietnam.¹⁹ In addition to the numbers, by monitoring the United States press, Ho and Giap kept abreast of the reaction to their military actions, keeping track also of the mounting casualty count and the slowly mounting United States public anti-war repercussion to the count. Snipers, sappers, mortar rounds, mines, and booby traps created newsprint and television footage.²⁰ (For more on the public reaction to the war, see Chapter Seven, Social Issues).

¹⁸US Department of State, "Contributions of Free World Nations to South Vietnam," (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 1-12.

¹⁹"President Ho Chi Minh's Message to the American People," Vietnam Courier, 2 January 1967. Echols Collection.

²⁰BDM, "Lessons Learned," 3-28.

Military Operations - 1967

In the meantime throughout 1967, U.S. operations continued to attrite Giap's forces, such as operation **Cedar Falls**, conducted 4 to 26 January 1967 in the III CTZ. This air and ground operation successfully destroyed VC and NVA forces, infrastructure, and installations of the Vietcong Military Region IV (vicinity of Saigon); evacuated civilians from the area for resettlement; and established a specified strike zone to preclude further use by the Vietcong. On 26 January 1967, the body count from the operation was 720 VC or NVA killed, 3,702 tons of captured or destroyed rice (enough rice to feed 13,000 troops for a full year), and almost 6,000 refugees relocated.²¹

From 22 February through 14 May 1967, the U.S. Army conducted airmobile operation **Junction City**, the largest battle between U.S. and NVA forces up to that date. This operation took place in War Zone C, northwest of Saigon with MACV Headquarters claiming 2,728 enemy killed in action (KIA), 97 suspected Vietcong detained, 491 individual weapons, 100 crew served weapons and many documents captured. In addition, the allied force destroyed 164 enemy base camps, one capable of supporting an entire enemy division.²²

²¹MACV, "Command History, 1967, Vol 1," 385-387.

²²Ibid., 387-390.

Providing interdiction and strategic bombing in support of the ground campaign, **Rolling Thunder** and other air strikes increased in intensity in 1967. The Johnson administration approved sixteen additional fixed targets within North Vietnam from late January through early February 1967. In order to slow down the use of sampans and barges used to transport men and materiel, aerial mining of selected areas of North Vietnam (but not Haiphong harbor) was approved on 23 February 1967.²³ The first U.S. Navy strikes against a MiG base at Kep, about 35 miles north west of Hanoi, took place in April 1967 with hits scored on the runway, control tower, and airfield buildings.²⁴ On 10 September 1967, U.S. Air Force bombers struck North Vietnam's third port at Cam Pha for the first time.²⁵

However, for most of 1967 the off-limits zones for **Rolling Thunder** bombing were a ten-mile circle around the center of Hanoi and a four-mile circle around Haiphong.²⁶ Following bombing raids, Hanoi Radio denounced the attacks and called upon other "peace-loving" countries to condemn the United States. This was another example of dau tranh chinh tri (political struggle), dich van (action among the enemy). North Vietnam's strong condemnation indicated they

²³Morrison, Elephant, 301.

²⁴Ibid., 311.

²⁵Schandler, Unmaking, 56.

²⁶Gold, Papers, 235.

were concerned if the attacks continued for an extended time, they might have a devastating effect on the North Vietnamese war effort.²⁷

The MACV Command History for 1967 Volume I described the **Rolling Thunder** progress for 1967 as:

In support of the ROLLING THUNDER program for conducting air strikes against the NVN [North Vietnamese], aircraft of the FWMAF [Free World Military Assistance Force] flew combat sorties. The mission of the combat sorties was strike, flak suppression, armed reconnaissance, combat air patrol or rescue combat air patrol. In 1967 the numbers of combat sorties flown over North Vietnam were: USAF - 59,896, USN - 59,336, USMC - 9,012 and VNAF [Vietnamese Air Force] - 127 for a total of 128,371.²⁸

In an effort to cut-down the amount of supplies reaching South Vietnam, the U.S. Navy mined the internal waterways of South Vietnam and coastal estuaries of North Vietnam in February 1967. The air campaign and the mining operations, with their consequent diversions, along with successful ground operations, brought a general economic deterioration, and shortages of food, clothing, and medicine began to appear.²⁹ (For more on this topic, see Chapter Six, Economic Issues)

²⁷Morrison, Elephant, 310-311.

²⁸USMACV, "Command History, 1967, Vol 1," 428.

²⁹Davidson, Secrets, 97.

1967 Year End Statistics

In addition to these major operations, numerous other operations took place throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia and by the end of 1967, in the Vietnam theater, the U.S. reported known enemy losses of 145,200. These operations deeply disturbed the North Vietnamese leaders, as they would any military and political leader. In December 1967 Douglas Pike wrote that the enemy was seriously concerned about its losses, and, therefore, decided to conduct more of the fighting using the regional and guerrilla units.

The communist attrition rate was too high, especially in the Vietcong main force units. The directive indicated that at the present rate, it was simply a matter of time before most of these units would be so decimated as to be militarily ineffective. Therefore, the order was given to assign greater priority to the regional and local guerrilla units.³⁰

In addition to the above mentioned battle losses, MACV classified an additional 24,000 VC and NVA non-battle losses due to sickness, AWOL, or Chieu Hoi. The majority of these non-battle losses came from the Chieu Hoi program, which guaranteed the safety of defectors from North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces. As reported by Headquarters, MACV, the monthly average for Chieu Hoi deserters from the North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces averaged about 1,106 per month in 1966 and increased to 1,814 per month by 1967,

³⁰Douglas Pike, The Vietnam War: View from the Other Side (Saigon: US Information Service, December 1967), 59.

for a total of over 21,000.³¹ In the IV CTZ alone, the 9,098 Chieu Hoi's for 1967 was almost double that of 5841 from 1966.³² (For more on this program, see Chapter Six, Social Situation).

These loss figures, when placed against with the 1967 infiltration (NVA regular soldiers who infiltrated into South Vietnam in order to join the military struggle) statistics of 113,700, netted the VC and North Vietnamese a loss of 55,500 combat troops operating in South Vietnam at the end of 1967.³³ More and more of the fighting was reverting to NVA regular force units as the guerrillas and VC were attrited. Therefore, the NVA regular strength within the enemy forces had increased to 52,000. This was necessary due to a lack of recruits from within South Vietnam to fill the militia and regional force units.³⁴ MACV intelligence reported a significant decrease in the number of combat effective maneuver battalions, from 132 in 1966, to 87 in 1967, a thirty-four percent decrease.³⁵ A loss of not only soldiers, but also a loss of weapons, caused this decrease. According to the "MACV Command History 1967"

³¹MACV Headquarters, "General Westmoreland's Background Information," (Saigon: MACV, 1967), chart 10.

³²Desobry, "Debriefing Report," E-4-8.

³³MACV, "Command History, 1967, Vol 1," 111.

³⁴Ibid., 2.

³⁵MACV, "Westmoreland," chart 5.

by the end of 1967, after a loss of 106,158 men, the total enemy strength decreased from 278,000 to 220,000.³⁶

Not only did active military operations cause a loss of personnel, but passive defense against air campaign **Rolling Thunder** also resulted in a loss of manpower available to be infiltrated down to South Vietnam. The manning of extensive air defense artillery and some intercept fighters (MiG-15s) employed by the North Vietnamese caused part of this loss. Senior General Tien Dung, second in command to Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, also proclaimed the "central task of all the party and people" was to assure the southward movement of men and supplies.³⁷ As evidenced by the estimated 500,000 laborers who repaired railroad lines, roads, and bridges, the country took-up this challenge. Being engaged in repair work excluded these 500,000 laborers from the available pool of soldiers that the North could infiltrate down the Ho Chi Minh trail to fight in the conflict or from producing goods to assist in the conduct of the war.³⁸

During this year, the ARVN force strength increased from 689,498 in September 1966 to 719,238 by September 1967

³⁶MACV, "Command History 1967," 2.

³⁷Patrick J. McGarvey, ed., Visions of Victory (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1969), 158.

³⁸Clodfelter, Limits, 132.

and to 754,00 by the year's end.³⁹ However, the number of maneuver battalions remained at 154.⁴⁰ In addition to an increase in raw numbers, and probably due in part to the success of the 1966-1967 dry season campaign, MACV Headquarters felt the ARVN forces developed into a more professional force increasingly capable of protecting their people against the Vietcong. However, General Westmoreland, commander of all U.S. ground forces in Vietnam, remained concerned over South Vietnam's high desertion rates and refusal to mobilize the whole of South Vietnam for war. In mid-1967, taking drastic (to the South Vietnamese thinking) action, Westmoreland approved the withdrawal of all US funds to non-productive ARVN units. The formation of another infantry division (the tenth fielded by South Vietnam), and several support units by late 1967 showed visible improvement in the South Vietnamese Army structure.⁴¹

By the end of 1967, over 480,000 United States military men and women were in Vietnam. Maneuver units within Vietnam consisted of elements of six different army divisions, and thirty-four separate brigades, regiments and other units.⁴²

³⁹MACV, "Command History 1967, Vol 1," 2.

⁴⁰MACV, "Westmoreland," charts 6 and 7.

⁴¹Morrison, Elephant, 311.

⁴²USMACV, "Command History, 1967, Vol 1," 156-157.

Effects of Pacification Programs

Not only were the North Vietnamese forces losing ground in strength against the coalition, but statistics indicated the Vietcong forces were losing control of the populated areas. This loss of control was due to programs within pacification, such as the U.S. Marine's Civic Action Program (CAP), Medical Civil Assistance Program (MEDCAP), the Vietnamese Rural Construction Program, and operation **Golden Fleece**, and the U.S. Army's Strategic Hamlet, Chieu Hoi, and Revolutionary Development (country building) programs. Designed to "win the hearts and minds of the people," the goals for the pacification process was to establish village security, and village governments, and improve local economies, public health, and public education. By assisting the rural villagers in accomplishing these goals, more and more villagers would not only deny a base of support to the VC (passive resistance) but would aid the U.S. and South Vietnamese governments in winning the war.⁴³ In 1966, within the pacification programs, the U.S. provided medical treatment to over six million Viet-nameese civilians, helped distribute in excess of 100,000 tons of food and relief supplies, and engaged in thousands of construction projects to include the construction of 470

⁴³William D. Parker, U.S. Marine Corps Civil Affairs in I Corps, Republic of South Vietnam, April 1966 to April 1967 (Washington D.C.: Historical Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1970), 43-44.

miles of road, 65 bridges, 122 schools, and 35 dispensaries and other public buildings, such as refugee centers.⁴⁴

The U.S. continued this support in 1967, providing medical support for more than 80,000 Vietnamese per month, a monthly food distribution averaged 6 million pounds. Assisted by U.S. military personnel the populace constructed over 3,000 projects (roads, bridges, schools, dispensaries, etc.) during 1967. Over 17 million pounds of rice and 128,000 pounds of salt made their way to Vietnamese civilians through redistribution by MACV.⁴⁵

Through success in these programs, MACV Headquarters stated that as of September 1966 the monthly average of secured villages was 4,144 and by September 1967 that figure rose to 4,645.⁴⁶ In the II CTZ, LTG Larsen reported freedom from tax collection by the enemy on 89% of the highway system which was fully available for use during daylight hours.⁴⁷ Over 53 percent of the railroad network (about 350 kilometers) was operable and in use. Almost 90 percent

⁴⁴US Department of Defense, Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1966 (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1967), 246.

⁴⁵US Department of Defense, Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1967 (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1969), 259.

⁴⁶MACV, "Westmoreland," chart 3.

⁴⁷Author's Note: This statement begs the fact the Vietcong controlled most of the region at night throughout the war.

of the population of this area was under US, ARVN or ROK military permanent, not temporary, control.⁴⁸

Likewise within the IV CTZ where BG Desobry reported that by the end of 1967, the GVN controlled approximately 60 percent of the population and significant progress made in both pacification and revolutionary development.⁴⁹ Those statistics certainly suggested a successful year for the United States and South Vietnamese forces.

The key aspect of this deprivation of North Vietnamese control was the loss of the highly productive rice producing regions near Saigon to include the Mekong Delta located in III CTZ and the area of II CTZ. In III CTZ, at the termination of **Cedar Falls**, the North Vietnamese's ability to operate was degraded by the relocation of the civilians of the area. Once cleared of noncombatants, that area became a "free fire zone" meaning any person in the area was Vietcong or NVA. Lack of civilian support severely degraded the North Vietnamese's ability to operate in the "Iron Triangle" area near Saigon, a rich, rice producing area.⁵⁰ LTG Larsen reported in November 1967 that 99 percent of all rice producing areas in II Corps Tactical Zone were under government control. He went on to say that "This control, in turn, has caused the enemy to be woefully

⁴⁸Larsen, "Debriefing," 6.

⁴⁹Desobry, "Debriefing Report," 2.

⁵⁰MACV, "Command History, 1967, Vol 1," 385-387.

short of rice, something we thought would be impossible to accomplish a year ago."⁵¹

Dau Tranh Phasing Debate

In 1966, Senior General Thanh, Commander-In-Chief of Southern Forces and Senior General Giap had hotly debated the Vietcong strategy. General Thanh advocated the deployment of North Vietnamese main force divisions throughout South Vietnam, while Senior General Giap pushed for the massing of divisions in a single strategic area just south of the 17th parallel in order to "spoil" the American's "search and destroy" strategy. This "spoiling attack" would force the US Army to shift troops from other parts of Vietnam, retard pacification progress in the northernmost I Corps area, and would delay the deployment of large US units in the area south of Saigon, the rice bowl of the country and one that was lost to the Vietcong due to pacification and constant U.S. military action.⁵²

By early 1967, General Thanh, believed if the war continued on the same course as 1966, the United States would force their terms upon the North Vietnamese. Thanh felt in order to regain the initiative, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong needed to conduct an "offensive on all battle-

⁵¹Larsen, "Debriefing Report," 6.

⁵²William O. Staudenmaier, "Vietnam: Mao vs Clausewitz." (Research Paper, US Army War College, 1977), 8.

fronts continuously and with great determination." He reiterated, "this was the only way to gain the initiative."⁵³ At the same time General Thanh worried about the three major advantages the Americans possessed: great numerical strength, powerful air forces, and artillery and armored units. Despite these strengths, Thanh still advocated a large-scale offensive with a large commitment of North Vietnamese troops.

General Vo Nguyen Giap, maybe remembering his disastrous 1951 offensive, and knowing the military strengths of both his own and allied forces, advocated a temporary regression into guerrilla warfare of phase one of dau tranh. He believed his forces were unprepared to confront the U.S. military machine. Giap needed more time to train more units which would provide a better chance for his soldiers to defeat the Americans.⁵⁴

Giap and Thanh's argument continued until Thanh's death on 8 July 1967.⁵⁵ Later that month the North Vietnamese leadership met in Hanoi at the Thirteenth Plenum to discuss strategy for the following year. Giap and Ho analyzed the military situation facing them. Their soldiers

⁵³Morrison, Elephant, 369-370.

⁵⁴Ibid., 370.

⁵⁵Olson, ed., Dictionary, 308. Author's Note: There is much debate about General Thanh's death. References stated he died from a B-52 attack on COSVN HQs, cancer, or a heart attack. Whatever the cause, it is not relevant to this study.

in the south had suffered without a single victory of significance in nearly two years, when in 1965 they had been at the gates of victory. The overrunning of a small US Army Special Forces camp in the A Shau Valley was their only victory in 1966.⁵⁶ Within NVA and VC units morale was sagging.⁵⁷ The desertion rate of soldiers of units enroute to South Vietnam was almost 30 percent in 1966.⁵⁸

At the Plenum, General Giap still advocated conducting phase one operations until his forces could become strong enough to conduct his strategy outlined above. Opposed now by another faction led by Le Duan, the First Secretary of the Dan Lao Dong party. Le Duan favored a short intense campaign followed by negotiations from a strong position; attacks on the cities necessary to assist in the political warfare arm in generating the "general uprising."⁵⁹ Although he had suffered one defeat after another, Giap recounted in a 1990 The New York Times Magazine article, he could sense the political and military situation in America was not on sound footing. The interviewer related Giap felt:

⁵⁶William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports (New York: Dell Publishing, 1981), 410.

⁵⁷Pike, War, Peace, 124.

⁵⁸"Is North Vietnam Weakening?" U.S. News and World Report Vol LXI, (Washington DC, December 12, 1966), 52-53.

⁵⁹BDM, "Lessons Learned," 3-85.

. . .the Americans were stretched 'As taunt as a bow-string:' and could not defend the entire country [South Vietnam]. He also detected growing antiwar feeling in the United States and rising unrest in South Vietnam's urban areas. Thus he gambled on an offensive campaign that would break the deadlock.⁶⁰

It may have been these feelings that caused Giap to agree to support the general offensive. North Vietnam needed something to "break the deadlock."

The Decision of the Thirteenth Plenum

After much debate, the long-standing Giap-Thanh argument culminated with the decision to launch a general offensive and general uprising at "thoi co" or opportune moment.⁶¹ The Thirteenth Plenum directive (approved by Ho and the Politburo) stated that the North would launch a military operation designed to spark, ". . . a spontaneous uprising in order to win a decisive victory in the shortest possible time." Ho tasked Senior General Giap to develop this directive into operational plans and orders for the offensive of *Tong Cong Kich, Tong Khoi Nghia* (TCK-TKN) (Vietnamese), or the Tet 1968 Offensive.⁶²

Later that year, Giap described the "regular force strategy" that he would employ in the Tet offensive in his book Big Victory, Great Task. His thesis was that victory

⁶⁰"Giap Remembers," NYTimes Magazine: 59.

⁶¹Westmoreland, Reports, 408.

⁶²McGarvey, ed., Visions, 176.

in Vietnam must come by way of the use of more or less regular military force. The only way to win, he repeated, is "militarily, on the ground, in South Vietnam."⁶³

Essentially, he laid out the operations plan for the offensive by encouraging,

. . . our southern people to attack comprehensively and continuously and to gain the initiative in attacking the enemy everywhere with all forces and weapons and with all appropriate methods. The comprehensive offensive is a coordinated military and political offensive and includes the attacks on U.S. troops and the puppet troops and administration in the mountains and jungle areas, the deltas, and the cities.⁶⁴

According to Phillip Davidson, Chief for United States Army Intelligence for Military Assistance Command Vietnam during this time, Giap developed his plan for the offensive using three assumptions. First, he felt the South Vietnamese Army was militarily unmotivated and would probably defect or desert if hit hard enough during the Tet offensive. This feeling was probably based upon the fact that most of the planning and execution of combat operations within South Vietnam had been taken over by the U.S. Army and its leaders, and that Giap did not feel the ARVN had a firm ideological reason for battling their Northern "brothers."⁶⁵ His second assumption was the Government of

⁶³Vo Nguyen Giap, Victory, 54.

⁶⁴Ibid., 60.

⁶⁵Pham Van Son, The Viet Cong "Tet" Offensive (1968) Volume II (Saigon: Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Printing and Publications Center, 1969), 474.

South Vietnam (GVN) would not be supported by the people of South Vietnam and the population would rise up during the TCK-TKN to further the communist cause. This assumption was probably due to the strong ideological beliefs that Giap and Ho held. Third, Giap believed the population and the armed forces of the GVN would turn on the Americans in the face of this offensive as they had against the Japanese and the French.⁶⁶

During this time, in addition to worrying about the ground forces currently facing his soldiers, Giap seemed preoccupied about the possibility of a United States invasion into North Vietnam. He was concerned that the US would expand the war into Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. He discussed the possibility of the US conducting a major landing of US forces on the shores of North Vietnam, and warned that China would intervene if such action took place.⁶⁷ This theme was one key to the U.S. inaction or lack of decisive action in South Vietnam.

Giap Targets Pacification Efforts

Also the major problem of the pacification program faced Giap. In order to counter the effectiveness of pacification efforts, in 1967 Giap made the operational decision to specifically target the Northern provinces and

⁶⁶Davidson, Secrets, 98.

⁶⁷Morrison, Elephant 371.

the Central Highlands. This would force General Westmoreland to take troops from the U.S. pacification priority areas such as II CTZ where LTG Larsen and his army corps was having success and in I CTZ where the U.S. Marines were making great strides in the pacification program with their CAP, MEDCAP and **GOLDEN FLEECE** programs.

Giap's plan would place the U.S. forces in a largely static role at the place of Giap's choosing. He chose those two areas because this is where pacification efforts threatened to destroy the critical factor in the southern insurgency - the Vietcong infrastructure. The critical loss of civilian control caused the North Vietnamese to revert to more guerrilla warfare vice the mobile warfare battles they had been attempting to fight since 1965.

Summary

So while 1967 saw many VC and NVA soldiers killed, it also saw the guerrilla gaining the tactical initiative by being able to choose the point and time of attack upon the U.S. and ARVN forces instead of engaging in large sized conventional warfare battles⁶⁸ while they prepared for the general offensive.

This pull-back to guerrilla tactics accounted for the optimism of LTG Larsen, BG Desobry, and other military and political leaders. Giap was beginning to draw the U.S.

⁶⁸Davidson, Secrets, 57.

soldiers farther and farther away from the population centers and maybe more importantly, away from successful pacification efforts.

CHAPTER FIVE

ECONOMIC ISSUES

To fight the enemy, we must eat our fill, be healthy, and have great qualities of endurance. That is why particular importance must be attached to economic problems and the people's living conditions. . . . The enemy does not fight us in the military and political fields alone, but also in the economic field. For instance, they blockade and pillage us, and sabotage our arrangements for food supplies. We too must fight them in the economic field.¹

Truong Chinh, 1969

Introduction

In order to fight the war, each involved country's economy had to be able to provide an enormous amount of economic support for the war effort. If internal sources could not provide goods and services, then nations must seek outside economic aid through political actions. As seen in previous chapters, the military effort demanded economic support from not only North Vietnam and South Vietnam but also China, Russia, Eastern Europe, and the United States as well. The Vietcong infrastructure attempted to deal with a decrease in the food, money and personnel support from the South Vietnamese population.

¹Truong Chinh, Primer, 125.

The North Vietnamese were experiencing shortages of manpower, transportation assets, food, and an increasingly targeted industrial base. In 1966 and 1967 the North Vietnamese became increasingly worried about their ability to carry on the battle economically. Truong Chinh seemed especially concerned about North Vietnam's ability to feed itself his 1963 book, Primer for Revolt written in a rice shortage year which seemed to occur in cyclic fashion as it did again in 1967. He expressed his apprehension in the chapter heading quote found above.

United States Economic Issues

The North Vietnamese watched carefully the debates concerning the war versus the economy in the United States. However, despite the debates covered by the news media concerning the condition of the economy, the war in Vietnam was only a minor expenditure. According to a U.S. News & World Report article of 20 November 1967, (which as indicated in a previous chapter, General Giap read), in economic terms, the war had very limited effects on the vast, powerful, and expanding U.S. economy. Taxes were lower than before President Johnson took office and no general tax increase had been levied to pay for war costs. The Johnson administration avoided imposing wage, price, and credit controls. The dollar cost of Vietnam as a percentage of total US spending for 1967 peaked at 3.6 percent (28 billion out of

784 billion) which represented about one fifth of the growth in the U.S. economy for 1966 and 1967 (up 25.9 billion a year since 1965 compared with a rise of 135 billion for total U.S. spending).² The Washington Post graphically collaborated this analysis by chart 1³ shown on this page and chart 2⁴ on page 138.

Chart 1 represents the comparison of defense spending compared to "Great Society" programs from 1964 through 1967. National defense spending was the dark columns and "Great Society" spending the hatched columns.

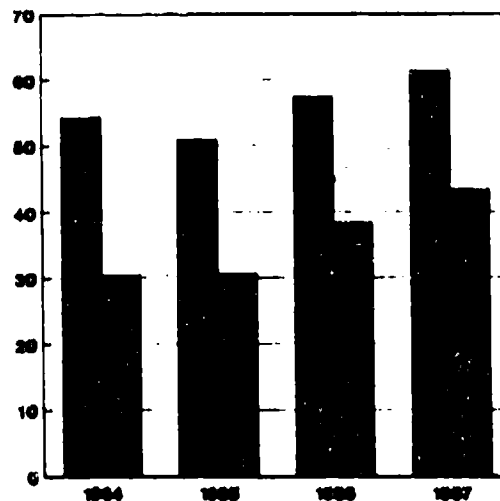


CHART 1: National Defense Versus the "Great Society"

²"Vietnam War in Perspective." U.S. News & World Report. 20 November 1967. 4-6.

³"The Changing Federal Budget," The Washington Post, 25 January 1967, A1.

⁴"The Budget Dollar," The Washington Post, 25 January 1967, A9.

The percentages of defense and international, veterans, interest, the Vietnam War, health, welfare, education, housing and other spending budgeted for 1967 show only nine percent of that budget allocated to the Vietnam War are shown below.⁵

The Budget Dollar 1967

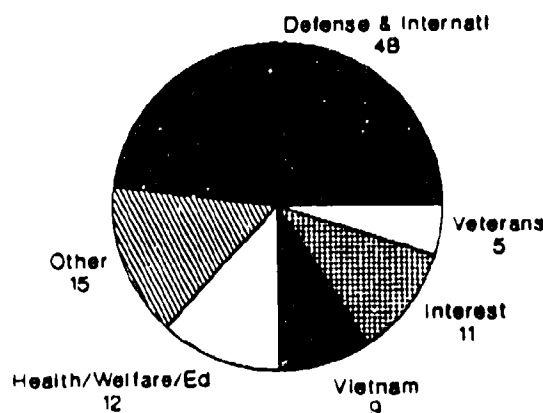


CHART 2: The Budget Dollar 1967

Basically, President Johnson chose a "guns and butter" policy and hence did not require the American public to make any economic sacrifices. As a matter of fact, the public gained by increased military spending. The only short-term costs were lives.

⁵Ibid., A9.

Those figures must have been mind-boggling to the North Vietnamese who were spending more and more money on their effort and on the importation of food and war materiel. Unfortunately research did not reveal the North Vietnamese percentage to use as a comparison.

On the US Senate Republican Policy Committee (a rather biased opponent of Democrat President Johnson) side of the debate, as of 1967 the war effort meant spending \$24 billion per year, with an increase in taxes threatened, a further drain on an already inadequate gold supply and an escalation of inflation.⁶ But to the outside observer, it was apparent the U.S. economy was able to sustain the war effort at the current rate for some time.

South Vietnam's Economic Issues

Within South Vietnam, American expenditures in support of the war caused a severe increase in inflation. During fiscal year 1966, the Saigon working-class cost-of-living index rose ninety-two percent. But the citizens in the South enjoyed a high standard of living when compared to the North.⁷ The U.S. State Department reported in early 1967 that the Government of South Vietnam started to enforce a difficult stabilization program that year consisting of a

⁶US Senate Republican, Republican White Paper, 10.

⁷Schandler, Unmaking, 41.

devaluation of its currency, employing budgetary restraint, and overhauling its fiscal system.⁸

This issue did not seem to be of great concern to the various candidates running for national offices within South Vietnam in 1967. As related by the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, in The Bunker Papers, in the national elections held in the fall of 1967, the major issue was peace, not the economy. The candidates debated the high cost of living and the general state of the economy "surprisingly little" in the campaign.⁹ In an end of year wrap-up in 1967, Ambassador Bunker also stated by the "end of 1966 the economy had reached full employment, a much greater degree of urbanization, and imports were providing a large part of the basic food supply."¹⁰ According to Bunker, 1967 saw a relatively stable economy with food prices increasing the most. There was no food rationing, little or no unemployment, and "gains in real income made by some urban classes in 1965-66 have now spread to the rural areas."¹¹

⁸Department of State, "East Asian and Pacific Series 155." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1967.

⁹Douglas Pike, ed., The Bunker Papers Volume 1, (Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, 1990), 132.

¹⁰Ibid., 263.

¹¹Ibid., 264.

Since 1966, in spite of the war and probably because of it, South Vietnam experienced quite a bit of nation-building activity. This was no doubt due to the economic aid given to South Vietnam by various nations throughout the world-thirty-six in all. For example in 1966, South Vietnam received over \$337 million in exports from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore.¹² In 1967, economic aid given by France, Canada, Liberia, United Kingdom, Japan, West Germany, The Netherlands, and Australia totaled over \$1.1 billion. Other free world countries contributed massive amounts of medical and agricultural related supplies, educational assistance, electrical power units, technical support, petroleum products, grants for nation building (such as coal and electricity plants), clothing, food, and scholarships for Vietnamese students.¹³

In 1966, the United States supplied \$550 million in aid and followed the next year with a record \$700 million. The country used this money for activities such as the expansion and modernization of the port of Cam Ranh Bay, the building of five other deep-water ports, five jet-capable airfields, several with two jet-capable runways,¹⁴ the

¹²US Department of Commerce. "Exports to South Vietnam," as quoted by the Library of Congress, 1967 (History of the Vietnam War on Microfilm).

¹³Library of Congress "The Contributions of Free World Countries to South Vietnam." 1967.

¹⁴MACV, "Westmoreland," 2.

development of small industries in rural areas, the establishment of schools and educational programs such as the Revolutionary Development cadre school at Vung Tau which produced 15,000 ARVN cadre, providing electricity for 30 hamlets (consisting of over 150,000 homes), and the building and manning of over 2,500 dispensaries.¹⁵

North Vietnam's Economic Issues

Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese economic situation was deteriorating. In a series of newspaper articles published early in 1967, the North Vietnamese Vice Premier Pham Hung outlined the economic plan of the regime for 1967. It admitted to many problems caused by the disruption of transportation, communications, and agriculture by air, sea, and ground campaigns by United States forces, and that the government was unable to solve these problems alone. Pham called upon the population to assist in overcoming problems such the limitations of manpower on agriculture and food distribution. In March, the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, gave an equally pessimistic view of the economic situation. Although U.S. intelligence did not feel this situation was critical yet, the Government of

¹⁵MACV Office of Information, "Revolutionary Development: Plan for a New Vietnam." (Saigon: HQs., MACV, February 1967), 8-9.

North Vietnam's ability to provide for the population and support the war was on a decline.¹⁶

Loss of South Vietnamese Support for the VC

Part of the problem experienced by North Vietnam was due to a large influx into the cities by the rural agrarian population of South Vietnam. Since the U.S. buildup in 1965, according to Don Oberdorfer's account in TET!, "50,000 to 1,000,000 South Vietnamese per year had been fleeing their homes in the countryside" to the relative safety in the government dominated cities.¹⁷ This denied the Vietcong of their tax base, supplies, and recruiting base.¹⁸ This influx also put a strain on the economy of South Vietnam's cities and meant less rice production from the rural communities.

In addition to the movement of the population away from the Vietcong operating areas, the United States programs within pacification were also causing problems within the Vietcong infrastructure. The Combined Intelligence Center (CICV) of MACV compiled a summary of the Vietcong reaction of pacification programs such as Chieu Hoi

¹⁶MACV, "Command History, 1967," Volume 3, 24.

¹⁷Don Oberdorfer, Tet! (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), 56.

¹⁸Peter A. Poole, Eight Presidents and Indochina (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1978), 176.

("Open Arms" program designed to welcome VC and NVA deserters) and resettlement of South Vietnamese into GVN controlled areas. This document, dated 3 November 1967, stated the population was turning against the VC and this obvious lack of support for the VC was causing a problem within the VC leadership.¹⁹

According to an information paper published in Saigon by the US Information Agency in February 1967, Hanoi supplied only about twenty-percent of the Vietcong's operating revenue, while the South Vietnamese people provided eighty-percent. When the South Vietnamese refused to support the Vietcong movement in their area, the Vietcong resorted to extortion in the form of "war bonds," taxation, confiscation of private property, banditry, and threats of sabotage, assassination and kidnaping.²⁰ Though called "taxes" the South Vietnamese actually got nothing in return for this money or rice "donation" to the Vietcong cause except the supposed support and protection of the Liberation Army fighting for the liberation of South Vietnam. The Vietcong called this collection "taxes" in order to present a facade

¹⁹Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam. "Effects of Pacification as Perceived by the VC." (Saigon: HQ CICV, 2 November 1967), i.

²⁰US Information Agency, "How the Viet Cong Get Their Money." Saigon: USIA, No 67-SM-10, February 1967. 5.

of legitimacy.²¹ Through these actions the Vietcong did not endear themselves to the populous, but terror was an effective way to encourage support for the VC cause. It took an extremely strong-willed person to stand up to the armed "tax collector" when he came calling. MACV kept weekly statistics on the civilian casualties caused by VC repression or terrorism. For example, during the week ending 15 July 1967, the VC killed 82 civilians, including four national police officers, one revolutionary development worker, three social workers and one hamlet chief. This brought the year's total of deaths due to VC terrorism to 1,611. Over 3,000 were wounded for the year, with 16 national police officers, 2 revolutionary development workers, one district chief, and one deputy district chief wounded for the week. In addition, the VC abducted over 2,000 to include one Chieu Hoi.²² According to Supplement Number 2 to the United States Mission pamphlet, "A Study - Viet Cong Use of Terror," the total number of assassinations and kidnappings perpetrated by the Vietcong from 1958

²¹MACV, Office of Intelligence, "Rice in Vietnam: Provinces of I CTZ," (Saigon: MACV, 13 July 1968), 14.

²²"Weekly Box on Vietnam," (Saigon: Headquarters, MACV, 15 July 1967).

through October 1967 were 14,104 and 44,211 respectively, including 1,675 assassinated and 2,015 kidnapped civil officials.²³

However, these strong-arm tactics encouraged more and more South Vietnamese to abandon their rural VC controlled or contested village for a secure area. For example, a communique on "the enemy and friendly situation" in Military Region 5 during the first six months of 1966, outlined the population control problem in Binh Dinh (CTZ II) and certain other VC provinces of the region. It stated,

At present, we have noticed that people have increasingly moved to the GVN-controlled areas. This has become more and more serious. For example, at Cat Nhon village (Binh Dinh), of 6,500 inhabitants, there were 6,000 who moved to the GVN-controlled area. Besides, some villages of Southern Tay Hoa (Phu Yen) [province], Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Gia Lai, Kontum, and Darlak were reported abandoned. . . .²⁴

In addition, increasing numbers of South Vietnamese refused to cooperate with the North Vietnamese "taxation" system. Numerous reports demonstrated the VC taxation program caused deep resentment in rural areas. Reported in a Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam (CICV) captured document summary dated 2 November 1967, in some cases the

²³Supplement Number 2, "A Study - Viet Cong Use of Terror," Saigon: United States Mission, March 1967. (Echols Collection)

²⁴"Viet Cong Loss of Population Control," (Captured VC document, Saigon: 1967), 4. (Indochina Archives Collection).

people refused to provide the VC with rice.²⁵ Early 1969 U.S. intelligence reports from captured documents or interrogations of prisoners or Chieu Hoi, which indicated a number of difficulties with the Vietcong rice collection program. A shortage of trained and competent collection personnel, poor performance by cadres, animosity between the local cadres and the people, popular discontent at the high rate of tax, exodus of people from VC controlled areas, and allied operations to protect the harvest (such as U.S. Marine Corps operation **Golden Fleece**) during the collection period all contributed to a lack of rice for the VC units in 1967.²⁶ As an example, in the first eleven months of 1967, a total of about 428 metric tons of rice, enough to sustain 1,900 VC or NVA troops for one year, was destroyed or captured in the I CTZ (northern most provinces of South Vietnam).²⁷

Because of this lack of support, the Vietcong suffered a severe food shortage in 1967, even in areas close to the supply line of the Ho Chi Minh trail. One Vietcong lieutenant colonel who defected in 1967, reported the

²⁵CICV, "Effects of Pacification." B-1. (Indochina Archives Collection)

²⁶MACV, "Command History 1967," Volume 1, 105.

²⁷MACV, "Rice in Vietnam: Provinces of I CTZ." (Saigon: Hqs, MACV, 13 July 1968), 5.

"Vietcong had to hunt frogs and eat waterplants they found in streams. Their daily ration was only a cup of rice and some potatoes."²⁸

In a NLF document dated 5 October and captured on 7 October 1967, the Finance and Economy Section of the NLF of the Quang Nam Province called for an "Anti-American Day to save the people from starvation." It stated:

War is raging and personnel and property losses are growing. In certain areas, heavily affected by the war, the living standards of the local population we [sic] extremely low. In some areas, starvation has begun. . . . In the days to come, starvation will spread throughout the countryside. Starvation will reduce the contribution of personnel and materials for the revolution. Consequently our military activities will be greatly limited.²⁹

This program made the female cadre and the Economy Section responsible for gathering rice from the population, door to door. The report went on to say,

. . .the collection should be completed during the 'Food-Saving Day.' At the end of the 'Food-Saving Day' all requisitioned rice should be stored in the nearest depot of the village concerned.³⁰

The fact that this document said to *STORE* the rice, not distribute it to the starving peasants, in NLF depots leads one to believe the NLF wanted to get every bit of

²⁸Huynh Cu, "Defector Tells of Low Morale, Hunger among Vietcong." Saigon: United States Information System, August 1967.

²⁹Finance and Economy Section, "Organization of an Anti-American Day to Save the People from Starvation," Quang Nam Province, 5 October 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)

³⁰Ibid.

available rice to support the NLF in carrying out its Tet offensive and was not concerned with helping the "starving population."

The NLF also hoped to benefit from the propaganda generated by this program. As stated in the letter, "Besides carrying out Anti-American Day within their agencies and units, cadre and soldiers should propagandize and motivate the people in the area in which they are bivouacking or operating."³¹

In a report dated 12 October 1967 concerning a detention camp in Phu Yen province, South Vietnam, the camp experienced difficulties in farm production due to the heavy rains.³² Another report stated a Thought Reform Camp was short of food supplies such as rice and salt. "Two detainees died of beriberi and 14 others debilitated by starvation. As a result the camp was moved to Hoa Trinh mountain to find tubers for rice substitute, for the detainees."³³ The document also stated the cadre of the camp were suffering from the lack of rice to support this small operation of only six members.³⁴

³¹Ibid.

³²MACV, "Bulletin No. 8239, Enemy Documents." Saigon: 1 December 1967. Trans unk. Report 12-1229-67, item 1.

³³Ibid., item 2.

³⁴Ibid., item 3.

The Current Affairs Committee reported on the activities of the Supply Councils in Ba Bien Province. Vu Nhat stated the allied economic blockade seemed to have failed in that area of South Vietnam, but that serious problems remained. In order to meet those requirements, it urged all sections within the councils to coordinate their efforts.³⁵

The Irregular Conference of Chau Thanh District (Binh Duong Province) Supply Council held by the Standing Committee minutes, captured by the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment on 17 January 1967, stated,

because of continuous enemy military action in our deep area our movement of civilian laborers serving the supply task has been badly affected. . . .it was practically impossible for us to muster any personnel or supplies.³⁶

It continued saying,

. . . the work has been badly done; the result has been failure to control both costs and distribution of supplies. . . .Other food supplies; compared to the cost, the quantity purchases is still too low and will not meet the requirements for the next winter-spring period.³⁷

This report went on to discuss problems in storage of supplies due to allied action, peasants allowing the food

³⁵Vu Nhat, "Directive #30/CT Dated 24 October 1967 Current Affairs Committee." (Captured Vietcong Document, Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, 24 November 1967), 3.

³⁶Chau Thanh District Supply Council, "Minutes of the Irregular Conference of Chau Thanh District Supply Council held by the Standing Committee," (Binh Duong Province, 7 January 1967), 2. (Indochina Archives Collection)

³⁷Ibid., 4-5.

to spoil, peasants feeding the Vietcong rice supply to chickens, and difficult transportation due to allied bombardment and ground military action. These actions by the rural population demonstrated a decided lack of cooperation with the Vietcong.

In direct support for the winter-spring 1968, a Current Affairs Committee provided guidance for entry and exit points and procurement of food supplies in a supply directive dated 23 October 1967, captured on 22 November 1967. It encouraged all members to

Make an all-out effort to develop entry and exit points, even minor ones. Urge the people to help the armed forces buy sufficient amounts of rice so it may achieve greater success during the 1967-1968 Winter - Spring campaign. Appeal to all supply Councils, Finance - Economy Section, Rear Service Group 84, Security Agencies, Farmers, Women and Worker Associations to coordinate with each other to insure success in the purchasing and requisitioning task. Request all personnel to contribute to the Party fund.³⁸

These documents demonstrate the Vietcong problems in obtaining supplies necessary to sustain their military and political operations.

Loss of Transportation Assets

In 1967 import tonnage to North Vietnam was 40 percent greater than the 930,000 metric tons delivered in 1966. Mining and air strikes, as well as ground operations such as Australian **Operation Portses** and American operation

³⁸Vu Nhat, "Directive #30/CT," 2.

Summerall, and an unnamed Korean operation³⁹ on the lines of communication (LOC) such as the Ho Chi Minh Trail, impeded the flow of these supplies once in country.⁴⁰ Not only did these air strikes destroy supplies bound for the Vietcong, but also the loss of vital transportation assets (over 5,000 motor trucks, 2,475 railroad rolling stock, and 11,425 watercraft from 1 January through 20 December 1967), resulted in a bottleneck of supplies at Haiphong Harbor. By October 1967, road and rail interdictions by air strikes had reduced the transportation clearance capability at Haiphong to about 2,700 short tons (STON) a day. An average of 4,000 STON arrived per day in Haiphong during 1967.⁴¹ A direct and immediate effect was shown of the ability of U.S. air strikes to interdict ammunition shipments. When good weather facilitated complete interdiction of the rail line between Hanoi and Lang Son, near the Chinese border, virtually no U.S. aircraft were shot-down during a two-week period in May 1967, due to an apparent lack of anti-aircraft ammunition.⁴² This impact was further demonstrated in an article written by General Giap in 1967 contained in Visions

³⁹"Allied Drivers Seek to Open Coast Roads," The Washington Post: 4 April 1967, p. A9.

⁴⁰MACV, "Command History, 1967," Vol 1, 109.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²"What 2 1/2 Years of Bombing Has Done to North Vietnam." U.S. News and World Report: 11 September 1967, p. 35.

of Victory, a compilation of North Vietnamese articles and speeches. In the article, entitled "The Strategic Role of the Self-Defense Militia," Giap strongly enforced the need for stepped up transport because, "No matter how fierce and ruthless the enemy's attacks may be, we must be resolved to assure smooth communication, to meet the demands of the front line. . . ."43

Manpower Shortage

MACV estimated North Vietnam's war expenditure to be about \$47 million a year in 1967.⁴⁴ In addition to providing more money to the effort, as the South Vietnamese tax, supply and recruiting base dried up, the troop replacement burden fell increasingly on the North Vietnamese. The wider use of women in the labor force, freeing men badly needed for military replacement evidenced manpower problems in North Vietnam.⁴⁵ Even though this use of women was keeping in-line with the Vietnamese concept of "total war," it also demonstrated a lack of able-bodied males willing to

⁴³Vo Nguyen Giap, "The Strategic Role of the Self-Defense Militia," as contained in Visions of Victory, edited by Patrick McGarvey, (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1969), 246.

⁴⁴MACV, "Command History 1967" Vol I, 73.

⁴⁵U.S.G. Sharp and W.C. Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968) (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1968), 8.

commit themselves to the three-month trip down the infiltration trail, under hardship conditions.

Hoc Tap, the authoritative journal for the communist party, as quoted in MACV's "Command History, 1967," openly admitted to a shortage of manpower in July 1967. It conceded the biggest gap in manpower was the shortage of skilled labor to operate tools and machinery.⁴⁶

Of the 18 million people who lived in North Vietnam, about one-half formed the work force and about 80 percent of that figure were employed in agriculture.⁴⁷ A shortage of manpower for agricultural activities was also evident from a 1 November 1967 Radio Hanoi broadcast, as quoted by MACV, which stated the peasants were "letting the rice overripen in the fields" and the harvest was not "fully underway."⁴⁸ In addition to the North Vietnamese having problems harvesting their crops, two captured NVA documents indicated the NVA leadership moved five-percent of the physically able NVA regular soldiers serving in South Vietnam to rear areas to assist in agricultural production.⁴⁹ Other captured documents expressed concern that due to a lack of VC manpower, over six-hundred tons of

⁴⁶MACV, "Command History, 1967," Volume 3, 25.

⁴⁷"2 1/2 Years of Bombing," U.S. News and World Report, p. 335.

⁴⁸MACV, "Command History, 1967," Volume 3, 27.

⁴⁹CICV, "VC/NVA Morale." (Saigon: Hqs MACV, 14 November 1967), 2.

rice went unharvested in three villages due to intensive military operations conducted by the U.S.⁵⁰

Even with this manpower shortage, the North Vietnamese government vigorously advocated birth control. This program was due to the food shortage, not because manpower was not needed to further the war effort. The population growth rate was approximately three to three and one half percent a year as reported by a Rand Study done in 1971.⁵¹ The North Vietnamese had seen the havoc that could be brought to bear upon a government which could not feed its people, such as the peasant uprisings in 1930 and 1945 as discussed in earlier chapters. By advocating birth control, the government could continue to provide food for the people and ensure the continuance of the government.

North Vietnam suffered from a food deficit since the division of the country, as most of the agrarian economy existed in South Vietnam, and especially in the Mekong Delta located in the southern tip of South Vietnam. The bombing of North Vietnam and the drain on the manpower needed to farm the available land further affected the ability of the North Vietnamese to feed themselves. This forced North Vietnam to ask for massive shipments of grains from Russian and China. By January 1968, Hanoi had received almost \$600 million in economic aid and \$1 billion in military assis-

⁵⁰Ibid., A-1.

⁵¹Jenkins, "Why the North Vietnamese," 6.

tance from China and the Soviet Union.⁵² According to the July issue of the UN Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, as quoted in South Vietnam, the value of Soviet non-military exports to North Vietnam had dropped from \$74 million in 1965 to about \$67 million in 1966. The value of North Vietnamese exports to the Soviet Union had declined from about \$31 million in 1965 to \$25 million in 1966. According to North Vietnamese Communist Party newspaper *Nhan Dan*, Communist China signed an agreement for an undisclosed amount of aid in the form of a grant on 7 August 1967.⁵³ As related in an interrogation of an NVA sergeant, some of this aid was probably the canned goods used by NVA regiments operating in South Vietnam. These foodstuffs consisted of canned meats, fish, vegetables, spices, powdered eggs, powdered milk, and cooking lard from USSR, China, East Germany, and Poland.⁵⁴

Bernard Fall described the food shortage problem in Last Reflections on a War, when he reported that by late September 1966, Jean Raffaeli, a French journalist in Hanoi, related food lines in the city and announced food rations were in part not available.⁵⁵ The U.S. Information Agency

⁵²Clodfelter, Air Power, 135.

⁵³Sobel, ed., South Vietnam, 467.

⁵⁴Truong Cong Tu, "PW Interrogation VC/NVA Use of Canned Rations." (Saigon: HQs MACV, March 1967), 2-5.

⁵⁵Fall, Last Reflections, 160.

provided an insight into the food shortage in a translation of a personal story of a former NVA sergeant captured in June 1967. He stated

. . . compared with what I have seen in South Vietnam, our life [in North Vietnam] was far from good. Most essential foods, particularly rice, were rationed. Sugar was sold only at Tet and only an invalid could buy canned milk--if he had a doctor's certificate. Although we were authorized to buy five meters of cloth a year, we could not afford to buy all of even this modest amount. I actually was happy when I became 18 years old and eligible to be drafted into the army because I knew I would have better food and clothes, and more money perhaps.⁵⁶

Within North Vietnam the grain ration remained at about twenty-seven pounds per month in Hanoi--the level set in 1962.⁵⁷ But the proportion of rice given to the citizens and soldiers of North Vietnam in their monthly ration declined because North Vietnam relied increasingly on the import of grains other than rice. Until February 1968, sixty percent of the ration consisted of rice, the rest being wheat, sweet potatoes, and manioc (fleshy edible rootstocks which yield a nutritious starch); after that date, only 50 percent was rice. In rural areas, where

⁵⁶Tien Dinh Tran, "The Two Vietnams -- As seen by a soldier from the North." (Saigon: U.S. Information Agency, June 1967), 2.

⁵⁷Jon M. Van Dyke, North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival (Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books, 1972), 28.

farmers produced extra food for themselves in private gardens, the grain ration was only six kilograms (about 13 pounds) per month.⁵⁸

The official meat ration also remained about the same as before the Rolling Thunder bombing operation, ten ounces per month, but even this low amount was rarely available.⁵⁹ The normal population rarely saw sugar, fish, fish sauce, and flour. The government reserved milk for newborns and the sick. Scarce and rationed items included soap, matches, tobacco, shoes, kerosene, and tea. Some foods, such as eggs, ducks, chickens, fruits, and vegetables could be bought on the free market, but affordable only to the rich. Rationed cloth was available at the rate of only four to six yards per person per year.⁶⁰

In order to provide the population with even a minimal amount of calories, more food had to be imported, almost six times more in 1967 than 1963, before the intensification of the war. Still, in 1967, a typical city-dweller's daily diet averaged only 1,700 to 1,900 calories with the free market purchases, and reports spread of iron deficiency anemia.⁶¹

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., 29.

⁶¹Ibid., 28.

This caloric drop from a total of 1,965 in 1963 to 1,880 in 1967 may not seem like much, however when analyzed with nutritional data, this drop becomes significant. For a example, a moderately active 5'4", small-framed, person participating in aerobic type of exercise a minimum of three to four times per week at 30 minutes each to maintain a body weight of 135 pounds 2,430 calories per day were required. With a sedentary level of activity, 1,890 calories a day are needed to maintain weight. If the North Vietnamese caloric count continued to drop, health problems and starvation were inevitable.⁶² To illustrate this low caloric figure, even the prisoners of war held in camps in Vietnam, run by the allies, received a daily food ration of 2,800 to 3,000 calories a day.⁶³

Loss of Industrial Base

The air campaign **Rolling Thunder** was having an impact upon the economy of North Vietnam. Although many authors disagree with this statement, in analyzing several articles contained in Visions of Victory, it seems apparant that the air campaign against North Vietnam was having an effect.

⁶²Kansas State University, "Noonliting" (Manhattan, Kansas: Cooperative Extension Service, 1991), 2-1.

⁶³"Summary of Background Briefing by MACV Provost Marshal and Embassy Political Section Representative," (MACV: Saigon. 30 June 1967), 3.

In one article, entitled "The Strategic Role of the Self-Defense Militia," by Giap, the importance of air defense, even to the point of firing individual weapons at the U.S. planes, was mentioned no less than thirty times in a thirty-one page article. Giap also stressed the need to further strengthen air defense in regard to more and improved air defense shelters and communications trenches. In addition, he stated that air defense methods must be improved and that new ways must be "invented" to counter the air threat from the United States.⁶⁴ This emphasis on air defense was undoubtedly caused by the impact the air strikes were having on North Vietnam and its ability to fully prosecute the war.

As reported by MACV statistics, the results of the combat air sorties at the end of 1967, were:

85 percent of their [North Vietnam] power generating resources have been destroyed. 30 percent of their railroad systems had been destroyed. 50 percent of their railroad repair capabilities have been destroyed. Their steel and cement plants have been rendered incapable of production. 3,500 trucks and 4,000 watercraft have been destroyed in the last ten months. Their MIG aircraft have been reduced by 50 percent. They have been forced to divert an estimated 500,000 people to maintain and repair roads, railroads, and vital facilities. Food shortages have developed requiring that flour be used to replace rice in some areas. There is little or no fresh meat available in the cities. In summary, the country is undergoing severe deterioration.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Giap, Strategic Role, as contained in Visions of Victory, edited by Patrick McGarvey, 168-199.

⁶⁵Ibid., 431.

In dollar amounts, by late 1967 operation Rolling Thunder "imposed some \$300 million in damage on North Vietnam, but at a loss to the American air force of more than seven hundred aircraft valued at approximately \$900 million."⁶⁶

In Hanoi, the allied air forces bombarded a thermal power plant half a dozen times, destroyed the Gia Lam railroad repair shop (one of the largest buildings in North Vietnam), and factories making tobacco, soap, hosiery, and electric bulbs were hit again and again. Attacks on Haiphong hit two power plants, severely damaged the country's major cement plant and wrecked a ceramics factory the size of a city block.⁶⁷ Elsewhere, the country's only real iron-and-steel complex, at Thainguyn, was hit more than 20 times in 1967, and air strikes destroyed factories of importance in Nam Dinh, Thanh Hoa, and Viet Tri.

North Vietnam's Vice-Minister of Heavy Industry stated in early 1968 that the U.S. bombing campaign destroyed 340 factories and work shops, some attacked 80 time.⁶⁸ Restoration of electrical plants took about a year. The North Vietnamese were able to either immediately replace other targets such as petroleum storage system, with

⁶⁶Karnow, History, 457.

⁶⁷Ibid., 27.

⁶⁸Ibid.

a more efficient system and barracks, and storage depots simply abandoned or dispersed throughout the countryside.

According to a CIA Intelligence Memorandum dated 12 May 1967, the bombing damage for just the month of April 1967 during operation Rolling Thunder had significantly eroded the industrial and military base of North Vietnam, but that this damage, taken in isolation, was not enough to stop North Vietnam from prosecuting the war.⁶⁹ North Vietnam did not have a well developed industrial base for supporting a war. North Vietnam had to rely on China and the Soviet Union for most of their war materiel such as weapons, armored vehicles, ammunition, and transportation.

The infusion of transport and military equipment from the USSR and Communist China replaced that destroyed during the bombing operation. Construction crews usually repaired bridges and roads in days or hours or simply bypassed them.⁷⁰

Economic Support for the Offensive

To conduct a massive general offensive such as Tet, the Politburo had to allocate the army the majority of the resources. North Vietnam, at this point, continued to attempt to build up its industrial base while waging war.

⁶⁹Steven Cohen, Vietnam: Anthology and Guide to a Television History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 201.

⁷⁰Ibid., 200-201.

But any major offensive would cause another great drain on the North's limited manpower and supplies.

Several factors lessened the effects of bombing on the North Vietnamese's ability to economically support the war. The first was their ability to rapidly recover from the bombing with the use of massive amounts of repair personnel. The second was the eight different bombing halts called by the United States from 1965 to the beginning of 1968. Five other times for extended periods of time, President Johnson put targets in the vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong off limits.⁷¹ Thirdly was the infusion of USSR and PRC goods. Due to these three reasons, Giap and Ho probably felt the North Vietnamese industrial base could withstand the added strain of the transition to phase three of dau tranh.

To assist them with this endeavor, the North Vietnamese sent a team, headed by Le Than Nghi, Hanoi's primary aid negotiator, and Dinh Duc Thien, Chief of the Logistics Department of the NVA Army, to the Soviet Union to negotiate for logistical aid to support the Tet offensive. These negotiations took place in Moscow from 14 August to 23 September 1967 and thereafter, "Soviet shipping to Vietnam made quantum jump until the Tet offensive in 1968."⁷²

⁷¹Johnson, Vantage Point, 241.

⁷²Parker Stalemate, 121.

According to South Vietnam, edited by Lester Sobel, the Soviet Union pledged to send Hanoi "aircraft, anti-aircraft and rocket equipment, artillery and small arms, ammunition and other military equipment and also auxiliary equipment." The non-military aid included "means of transportation, oil products, ferrous [iron] and nonferrous metals, foodstuffs, chemicals, fertilizer [and] medicines."⁷³ Analyzing various documents describing the weapons used by the Vietcong and NVA during Tet leads one to believe that the Soviets shipped numbers of RPG-7, a 1965 anti-tank weapon which fires an 80mm high explosive, anti-tank (HEAT) round. Also found in large numbers for the first time were Soviet 140mm and 122mm rocket artillery. Soviet-designed AK-47 automatic rifles, roughly equivalent to M-16 U.S. automatic rifles, were evident throughout the offensive.⁷⁴

Summary

Giap saw his forces facing the same type of economic problems encountered during his 1950-51 campaign against the French. He faced an economically superior foe, his soldiers were experiencing a lack of support from the local populace, and food shortages were apparent among the soldiers and the

⁷³Lester A. Sobel, ed., South Vietnam, 468.

⁷⁴"Enemy Firepower Said to Increase," The New York Times: 29 January 1968, p. 4.

population of North Vietnam. Most detrimental to his war, the "water" his "fish swam in" was drying up. The situation was not going to get better with time. Neither the economy nor the military could sustain phase two operations. If Giap reverted to phase one, the U.S. would persist with interdiction of the LOCs and "sweeps" of the countryside would continue to rob him of his bases of supply. As pacification intensified, more and more of the population would revert to GVN control. Accordingly, the only option left (as peace without U.S. capitulation was not an option), was to attempt to gain the initiative somehow or wait out the enemy.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL ISSUES

. . . those who have a tendency to rely on military action tend to ignore the political side of dau tranh and do not apply political mobilization, do not give explanation to the population, do not convince the people to follow their path. Such people fail to consolidate the National United Front, they fail to seek new allies outside the country. They neglect the study of the internal and world situation. This is all indispensable to the development of correct internal and foreign policies for combating a people's rebellion.¹

Truong Chinh, 1969

Introduction

As Truong Chinh stated above, revolutionist must develop the social aspect of the political struggle in order to have a successful execution of the dau tranh strategy. As seen before, the North Vietnamese looked not only inward at the Vietnamese people but also to the United States as well to gauge the effectiveness of their struggle. Prior to the Tet offensive, the United States and South Vietnam populations and soldiers executed the social aspect of war quite well. Both societies faltered a bit, but not enough to point toward a collapse of national will. The North Vietnamese leadership was facing the problems of loss of the support of

¹Truong Chinh, Primer, 179.

other nations, loss of support of the South Vietnamese, loss of "proper revolutionary spirit by the NVA and VC leadership caused by poor morale, sickness, and lack of recruits, and lack of honesty. This lack of honesty resulted in false reports from the field concerning the success of the political struggle. These issues will be discussed fully below.

Social Issues Within the United States

The population of the United States was starting to show signs of discontent concerning the Vietnam war. In January 1967, a Harris poll revealed the public was just as likely to blame the United States for a peace treaty violation in Vietnam as the enemy. In early February the Pentagon acknowledged it had lost 1,800 aircraft in Vietnam as opposed to the 622 "combat aircraft" it had announced earlier. The Chicago Tribune, normally a hawkish publication, declared in March 1967, that either the numbers coming out of Vietnam were wrong or the Pentagon was deliberately misleading the American public.² These incidents demonstrated a growing lack of trust in the United States government and in the United States military concerning its Vietnam policies.

²Herbert Y. Schandler, The Unmaking of a President (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 49.

However, before March 1968, vocal opposition to the war within the United States had either come from non-political groups largely unaffiliated with either political party or from a small number of democratic legislators. In fact, according to Gallup polls conducted from January 1965 to January 1968, just prior to the Tet offensive, the approval rating for the war was quite consistently around fifty percent as depicted in chart 3, below.³

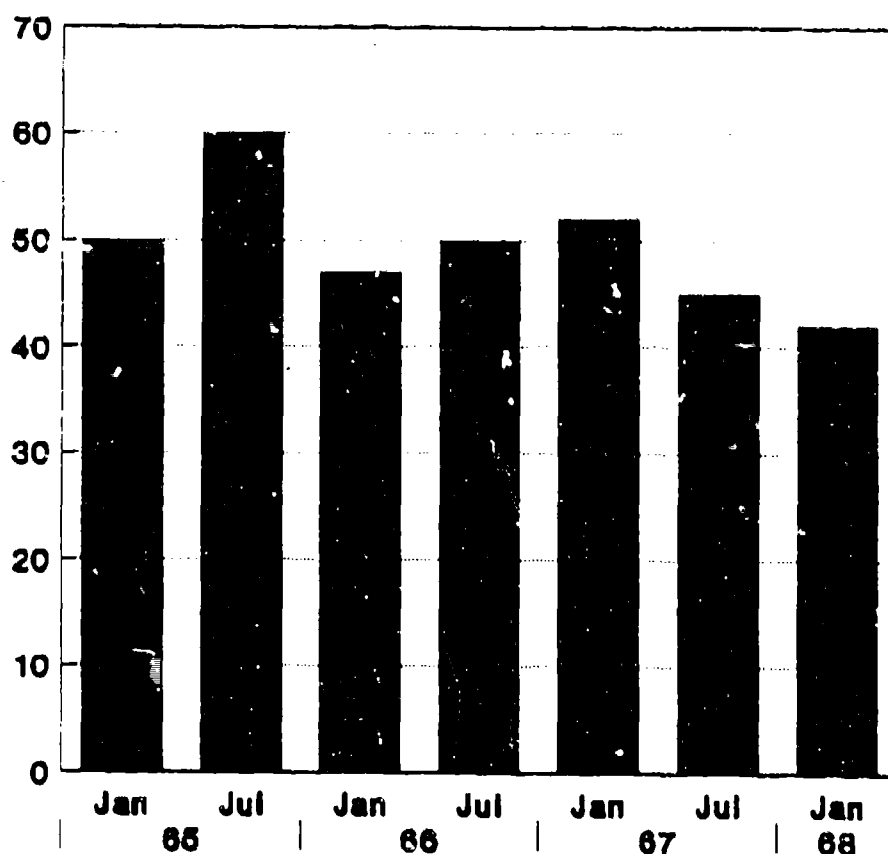


CHART 3: Support for the War

³Berman, Johnson's War, 60.

A 1967 poll showed fifty-five percent of the American people who were opposed to the war stated the reason for their displeasure was that the conduct of the war was just too timid.⁴ There did not seem to be a firm plan of what the American people wanted the military strategy to be, just that the current strategy was costing too much for too few results. The American people wanted a quick resolution, using whatever military might was necessary.⁵ By mid-1967 more than two-thirds of the American's who responded to a Gallup poll, still believed the U.S. support of the war was "morally justified."⁶ It was not until after the Tet Offensive of 1968 that public opinion really began to hamstring President Johnson.⁷

The vocal discontent seemed to find a home with student movements such as the one staged at the Pentagon in 1967. Unorganized, with no recognized leader, the movement was not in position to challenge the leadership of the country and was seen by the bulk of the population as "hippies."

⁴Karnow, Vietnam, 546.

⁵William S. Turley, The Second Indochina War (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), 83.

⁶Clark Dougan, Samuel Lipsman, and the Editors of Boston Publishing Company, A Nation Divided (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1984), 119.

⁷Michael Charlton & Anthony Moncrieff, Many Reasons Why: The American Involvement in Vietnam (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 150.

Martin Luther King, famed civil rights activist, remained silent about the war in Vietnam until 1967, when he delivered several speeches asking "new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and for justice throughout the developing world" be found. He also stated, "We in the West must support these revolutions."⁸ However, his following was politically weak and did not have a great impact upon the Johnson administration, though it did have minor influence on the social aspects of the United States. But black Americans, who had their hopes raised by President Johnson's promise for a war against poverty, began looting, rioting, and burning in the cities in 1967.⁹ This "Black Power" action was due to impatience with progress in the civil rights arena and was unrelated to the Vietnam War movement in the United States.

The North Vietnamese watched public opinion in the United States, as reported by a free press. As evidenced in the verbiage of Giap's article on "The Strategic Role of the Self-Defense Militia" written in 1967, the North Vietnamese were aware of the growing dissatisfaction of the American public over the conduct of the war. "They [U.S. Government]

⁸"King Urges Cease-Fire and End of Bombing, Denounces U.S. Role," The Washington Post, 5 April 1967, A1.

⁹Austin, President's War, 50.

are encountering the increasingly firm opposition of progressive peoples throughout the world and even in the United States."¹⁰

While it may be true that the North Vietnamese encouraged the peace movement within the United States and elsewhere in the world, they did not hold much hope that this dissension would force the United States to withdraw its forces from South Vietnam. In August 1967, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong told an American reporter, "We are grateful for the help of American peace demonstrators, but, in the final analysis, we know we must count mainly on ourselves."¹¹

Mr. Neilands, a reporter for *Communique for New Politics* (a left-wing paper published in Berkeley, California), interviewed President Ho Chi Minh in March 1967, and reported Ho was knowledgeable about the internal politics of the United States, especially where they concerned the war protest movements.¹²

As seen in these examples, the North Vietnamese kept a finger on the pulse of American public opinion. But did they even imagine what a furor the Tet offensive could cause? Had not the rallying calls for the United States

¹⁰Giap, "Self-Defense," as contained in Visions, 204.

¹¹Van Dyke, North Vietnam, 32.

¹²"CNP Home from Hanoi," Communique for New Politics: 30 March 1967. p. 1.

been "Remember the Alamo! Remember the Maine! Remember Pearl Harbor!" It is conceivable that a sneak-attack during a declared truce (especially one which caused huge American casualties) would provide a rallying point to reunite, instead of divide, the United States. Intense escalation of the war could have been the result.

Social Issues Within South Vietnam

All was not smooth on the South Vietnamese social scene with limited student and Buddhist protests against the war throughout 1967. A sign of democracy, these protests did little to influence the government or indeed, most of the population.

In 1966, the Communists did nothing to exploit the confusion caused when Prime Minister Ky ousted General Nguyen Chanh Thi. They did learn a lesson and Ho Chi Minh's principal deputy, Le Duan,

...explained in a secret message to his southern comrades in July 1967 that they 'had not taken the initiative in inciting the masses to arise' because their machinery in the cities of the region was 'still weak.' As a consequence, he admitted, 'we lost an opportunity.' He added, however, that the experience 'taught us a lesson' and the Communists began to construct an urban apparatus that became important, particularly in Hue, during the Tet offensive the following year.¹³

As discussed in Chapter Three, South Vietnam held national elections in September 1967 with a high turn-out of

¹³Karnow, Vietnam, 446-447.

voters. This democratic process, in the light of determined VC opposition, demonstrated faith in their governmental process by the voters. A captured Vietcong document dated 26 August 1967 stated, "The lower the percentage of voters is, the greater is our victory and the worse is the enemy prestige. The failure of the elections will deal a significant political blow to the enemy's policy."¹⁴ With approximately 4.5 million of the 5.8 million registered voters casting ballots, the Vietcong felt a deep sense of failure seeing their control of the South Vietnam population slipping away.¹⁵

Social Issues Within North Vietnam

In North Vietnam some minor protests occurred against the war, however, mostly it was business as usual. This could be attributed both to the severe punishments imposed against those who dared to confront the government's stand on the war and to the national resolve of their totalitarian society. The resolve demonstrated by a totalitarian country, due to the nature of society, is

¹⁴Coordination and Operations Committee 1, "Step up the tempo of Political Attacks during the Coming Enemy Elections." Current Affairs Committee, Gia Binh Province. Trans unk.

¹⁵MACV, "Statistics on the War in Vietnam." Briefing slides, prepared by MACV HQs for General Westmoreland's Background Sessions, Saigon. November 67.

traditionally greater than that of a democratic society. As explained by Lemos Fulmer in a research paper done for the US Army War College,

Their [North Vietnamese] resolve is always reflected as that of the mother country and therefore can be maintained to a much higher degree over an indefinitely longer period of time than that of their democratic opposition.

Finally it must be understood that in the eyes of the communist countries North Vietnam was not fighting a limited war, but rather one aimed at total conquest of their opponent. They were fighting an all-out effort against our [U.S.] limited one, and through the very fact of our [U.S.] unwillingness to risk superpower confrontation and possible world-wide escalation, they saw the means by which to defeat us [U.S.].¹⁶

Support of Other Nations

Gaining support from the United States people and other peoples of the world was very important to Giap's cause. As he stated ". . . seeking assistance from the socialist bloc and the people of the world is a very important strategic matter."¹⁷ A translation of a captured Vietcong document provided by the U.S. Embassy in Saigon echoed this sentiment. This document, prepared on 15 June 1966 by the Subcommittee for Foreign Activities of the Central Committee of South Vietnam (COSVN), stated socialist countries such as China, Russia, and Korea assisted with the propaganda campaign against the United States. But this

¹⁶Lemos L. Fulmer, "Vietnam: How Did We Get There? Where Do We Go From Here?" (US Army War College, 1983), 27.

¹⁷Giap, VICTORY, 58.

program's progress was not going as well as planned. This document goes on to say,

However, we fail[ed] to see all the difficulties and complexities in the relations with socialist countries, thinking that these countries will readily and wholeheartedly support the Front policy.¹⁸

Not only did this document point to problems in dealing with socialist countries but discussed the programs directed against the capitalist countries of France, Great Britain, and the United States. It stated these were not yet effective enough to affect foreign policy. "However, propaganda and foreign affairs were still slow and confused. They failed to reflect the success in the country which would create an international influence."¹⁹ In order to step up this campaign, the paper spewed encouragement saying

. . . as the revolution in South Vietnam is on an upswing, new developments are bound to occur. We are fully able to defeat the enemy in the foreseeable future. We might alter the balance of power to our advantage, thus creating conditions for eventual victory in a relatively short period of time.²⁰

This seems to point toward the hope for a successful transition to a *khôi nghĩa* (uprising of the people). However, at the time this document was printed, the decision to conduct the Tet offensive had not yet taken place. The

¹⁸Subcommittee for Foreign Activities, "Report on Activities, Programs, Direction and Outlook of Propaganda and Foreign Affairs Efforts." COSVN: South Vietnam. 15 June 1967. Trans unk. 2.

¹⁹Ibid., 3.

²⁰Ibid., 13.

paper went on to place further emphasis on the need for more propaganda directed against the Americans and their "lackeys." This propaganda was to persuade the American people and their allies to support the North Vietnamese cause and to oppose the US government's policies in Vietnam.²¹

The Vietcong violent reaction to pacification programs was taking its toll on foreign national opinion. The VC noted this was because their acts of terrorism were "mainly invisible as forms of war to the world at large, so that their response to this operation looks easily like wanton aggression or terror."²² Therefore, not only was the Vietcong losing his base within South Vietnam, but the repressive attribution for cooperating with the pacification program had the potential to erode world wide popular opinion, an important strategic consideration.

Loss of Support in South Vietnam

As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the pacification programs were succeeding in eroding the support for the VC, which greatly disturbed the Vietcong and North Vietnamese leaders. Captured documents collected by MACV in 1967 corroborated the MACV statistics. The situation

²¹Ibid., 14.

²²Konrad Kellen, "1971 and Beyond: The View from Hanoi." (Contract Study: Rand Corporation, 1971), 19.

reviews, letters, and notebooks provided more support to the MACV statistics than for the NLF's claims of vast "liberated" areas. A cadre's notebook captured on 15 January 1967 in Operation CEDAR FALLS furnished notes on a resolution passed by the Current Affairs Committee of the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP). The assessment they give of the situation in South Vietnam states the Vietcong "lost control of over one million persons in the rural areas within a single year--'calculated apparently from mid-1965 to mid-1966.'"²³ This trend continued into 1967 and must have impacted upon the decision to transition to a general offensive. This loss of control could have signaled the need for a transition before the bulk of the population was lost to the communist cause.

According to MACV, the reasons for this loss of population control included:

1) GVN recovery of territory formerly occupied by the Viet Cong; 2) an exodus of residents from Viet Cong areas to refugee camps maintained by the GVN; 3) defection in response to the GVN's Open Arms (Chieu Hoi) program; 4) desertion from Viet Cong ranks for return to native villages in secure areas; and 5) private resettlement in areas beyond Viet Cong control. More than 70,000 Viet Cong have rallied under the Open Army program since 1963 and more than 2.0 million refugees have been recorded since 1 January 1964.²⁴

²³"Viet Cong Loss of Population Control." Captured Vietcong Documents: Indochina Archives Collection, 1967. 1. Trans unk.

²⁴Ibid.

The notebook also credited poor leadership for this loss of control. This failure, the notebook stated,

. . . had caused difficulties in VC financial support and in the conscription of guerrillas and laborers. . . the recruitment of personnel to fill vacancies in units and among laborers presents a serious problem. If we fail to solve this problem urgently, we will be bound to encounter more difficulties. Four-fifths of the funds derive from the population. . . Guerrillas dropped to 180,000 and the requirement this year is 300,000. The decrease of quantity also involved a decrease in quality.²⁵

In a secret directive signed by the chief political officer of the North Vietnamese 95th Regiment on 13 May 1967, the loss of population for the Phu Yen Province (in the II Corps area of operations, middle section of Vietnam) dropped down by 220,000 persons. Out of 360,000 inhabitants, the VC control dropped from 260,000 to just 20,000.

. . . or one-tenth the old figure. Because of this situation, prompt action should be taken to smash the enemy pacification plan and bring the people to their former residences. This is a strategic task of the Revolution. We have to accomplish it at all costs.²⁶

This strong statement demonstrated the frustration experienced among the leadership of the party and points out another indicator that an offensive was in the planning. Prompt action would have to be taken to stop the U.S. pacification program at all costs.

²⁵Ibid., 2.

²⁶Ibid., 4.

The deserters from the VNA and VC cited as reasons for rallying to the government cause such as "hardship caused by allied military pressure and poor living conditions, ideological and moral disenchantment with the VC, and the upcoming Tet holiday."²⁷

Moral and ideological disenchantment were discussed in a study of interviews with more than 100 Chieu Hoi ralliers published in 1967 in U.S. psychological operations policy, Number 39, dated 30 June 1967. Many of the interviewees were not enthusiastic over the prospect of a "protracted war," and were disenchanted after early hopes for a quick and easy victory were smashed with the infusion of U.S. troops into the South Vietnamese battlefield. Also cited was the withdrawal of support coupled with the changing attitude toward the VC among the southern population.²⁸ One deserter, a woman assistant company commander of a VC unit, stated her decision to desert stemmed from poor leadership on the part of her superiors and that,

. . . guerrilla morale had been affected markedly by predictions of victory every year since 1964, followed more recently by statements made from higher ranking officers that it might be necessary to fight another

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, "Viet Cong Cadre Vulnerabilities," Saigon: JUSPAO Planning Office, 30 June 1967, 2.

officers that it might be necessary to fight another five, ten, or twenty years.²⁹

About one-half of the deserters said they did not know what they were fighting for and about the same number were unhappy with the lack of support provided to them by their unit. Over ninety-percent of the defectors stated their units did not have sufficient food or medical care.³⁰

Examples of this lack of support were revealed in a 1967 Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam (CICV) investigation of over 200 captured documents concerning medical causes of non-effectiveness among VC and NVA troops. This investigation revealed that diseases appeared to be the major cause of non-effectiveness on the battlefield, ahead of wounds. Malaria was responsible for over half of all hospital admissions for disease. Other causes for non-effectiveness were gastrointestinal, respiratory, and nutritional deficiency diseases.³¹

These reasons for deserting, lack of food, proper medical treatment, disease prevention, and ideological and moral disenchantment, point to a undeveloped Vietcong or North Vietnamese politicization program and support base.

²⁹Huynh Thi Tan, "A Viet Cong Heroine Tells Why She Came Home," (Saigon: May 1967).

³⁰Ibid.

³¹CICV, "Medical Causes of Non-Effectiveness Among VC/NVA Troops (Second Update)," Saigon: MACV, 17 November 1967, 12-13.

Other indications pointed out support for the popular uprising was not going well. Vu Nhat's directive stated, "We are not likely to continue to supply rice to the revolution and insure the daily income of the people unless we motivate a political struggle."³² So in addition to dich van (action among the people), dan van (action against the enemy) needed to occur. ". . .we must isolate and contrive to annihilate them or cause discord in their rank so that they will destroy each other."³³

Not only didn't the population seem as if it were ready to take arms up for the cause, spy operations in the villages and pacification program activity caused consternation to the province and district officials. As one Ben Co District official recounted,

Their (allied) intelligence activities have hurt us. . . .The activities and organizations of the enemy Chieu Hoi campaign must be firmly checked. Dangerous pacification personnel and various intelligence operation [sic] must be thoroughly studied for destruction.³⁴

Another document originating in Thuy Dau Mot Province, addressed to various Village Security Sections, prescribed security measures against the families of VC defectors. These defectors committed counter-revolutionary

³²Vu Nhat, "Directive," 5.

³³ibid.

³⁴Dung, "Requirements." (Handwritten note dated 10 June 1966 from Dung of Ben Co District, Binh Duong Province, South Vietnam, to Bay Tuyen. 9 July 1967), 1.

action by furnishing the allies with VC troop locations and activities.³⁵ This activity wasn't restricted to just that province. The western Nambo district security section (CTZ I) also reported problems along this same line and suggested "undependable" cadre and members were getting promoted to higher ranks.³⁶

Lies to Leadership concerning Political Struggle

Even in the light of this evidence that the people of South Vietnam lacked faith in the ability of the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong to provide for them sufficiently, the VC in Binh Dinh still insisted on lying to themselves by stating that "majority of the people were confident in the leadership of the Party. . . ." But they did give credit where credit was due, to both the Pacification Programs, US and ARVN military operations and the inability of the VC to provide for the population.

. . . the reason why shortcomings rose to such a degree was because of the enemy's stepped-up activities in various fields and because our cadres were not concerned with the welfare of the people in the liberated

³⁵H5, "Directive #11/AN Addressed to various Village Security Sections." (Captured VC document, Captured Document Exploitation Center, USMACV, 11 September 1967), 1.

³⁶District Security Section of Western Nambo, "Directive on Maintenance of Internal Security by Villages in Liberated (VC) and "Weak" Areas (GVN)" (Captured VC document, Combined Documents Exploitation Center, MACV, 28 August 1967), 1.

areas. Because of the above shortcomings, our cadres are incapable of controlling the people and restoring security in the liberated area.³⁷

MACV recovered this communique on the enemy and friendly situation in Military Region 5 during the first six months of 1966. The VC not only noted this problem in the Binh Dinh region (northern sector of South Vietnam, CTZ II) but also in other VC provinces of the region.

More captured documents discussed the "fact" that "Politically, the revolutionary forces has [sic] grown stronger,"³⁸ yet the documents stressed that difficulties would be encountered if the political indoctrination of ideology was not done correctly. Tasks for Military Region III included:

- Wear down and destroy the enemy troops.
- Consolidate and develop the liberated areas.
 - The population in liberated areas is 2.1 million.
 - The majority of the people sympathize with the Revolution.
- Provide competent leadership for the MR [military region].
- Direct all activities toward a general counter attack and a general uprising.³⁹

The 21st U.S. Infantry Division captured this document on 23 October 1967, in South Vietnam. It is clear by this time, the COSVN and North Vietnamese had made the

³⁷Ibid., 5.

³⁸MR III, "Organization and Responsibilities of Leadership at Province and District Levels." COSVN Conference: 23 October 1967. Trans unk. 1.

³⁹Ibid., 2.

decision to conduct the Tet offensive and that considerable attention must be given to the proper execution of the people's uprising or khoi nghia. It is also interesting to note again, the Vietcong felt the majority of the population was sympathetic to the Vietcong cause and therefore, would rally to support the uprising. This could be an attempt to "tell the boss what he wanted to hear."

For example, Giap was well known for having a temper. His nickname was "Volcano Under the Snow." In an New York Times interview conducted in 1990 Giap admitted that "there were difficult moments when we wondered how we could go on." Yet, he thundered, "We were never pessimistic. Never! Never! Never!"⁴⁰ This type of attitude lends credence to the possibility that claims from the field were greatly exaggerated.

On 28 June 1967 Peking radio claimed that on 14 June 1967 the PLAF killed or wounded "110 U.S. aggressors of the 1st Battalion of the (garbled) Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division." The U.S. figures allowed one killed in action (KIA) and 13 wounded in action (WIA). Also contained in this summary from CICV, a former VC local force member responded to questions about these false reports. He stated,

Some reports which were sent to these radios weren't true. They were sent by men who wanted to receive promotions or rewards. I know of o. mple ..

⁴⁰"Giap Remembers," NYTimes, 23.

was the attack which occurred in Long Dinh. I was there and I heard others tell me about the results of that attack. But the commander of that unit sent a false report to Hanoi radio. He gave a wrong number of casualties on the Nationalist side. And so Hanoi radio, following the report, gave wrong information also.⁴¹

From the NFLSV on 15 September 1967 came the claim that between October 1966 to April 1967 over 175,000 casualties were inflicted on allied forces, including 70,000 Americans.⁴² An article carried by *The Vietnam Courier* dated 26 June 1967, stated that over 85,000 U.S. and "satellite" (FWMAF) troops died, and that 28 battalions were wiped out as a result of the North Vietnamese 1966-67 Dry Season Offensive (October 1966 - April 1967).⁴³ In addition to various articles and radio broadcasts, these inflated figures appeared in various propaganda pamphlets published in Hanoi in 1967. Written by military and political leaders, to include the COSVN Central Committee, regaled the "victories" of the 1966-67 Dry Season Offensive.⁴⁴ This massive outpouring of propaganda was

⁴¹CICV, "Vietnam Communist Casualty Claims," Saigon: MACV, July 1967, 1-2.

⁴²Paris AFP (Radio Broadcast), "NFLSV Releases Figures on Enemy Losses," Algiers: Paris AFP, 15 September 1967. (Indochina Collection)

⁴³"Heavier Defeats for the U.S.," The Vietnam Courier, Saigon: 26 June 1967. (Echols Collection).

⁴⁴Truong Son, The Winter 1966 - Spring 1967 Victory and Five Lessons Concerning the Conduct of Military Strategy, Unknown Author, A Great Victory: Winter 1966 - Spring 1967, and General Van Tien Dung, South Vietnam: U.S. Defeat Inevitable (Saigon: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1967)

probably part of the intense politicization Hanoi ordered to counter the demoralizing military defeats of that campaign and to rally the people to the communist cause.

The U.S. casualty figures published in the articles and pamphlets above were grossly out of proportion according to a *U.S. News and World Report* article of 10 May 1967. It stated from January 1961 to May 1967 the United States lost 9,600 soldiers, with an additional 57,000 wounded and 2,000 non-battle losses, approximately 60,000 below that number reported by Hanoi. The report went on to list casualties by age, home state, and rank.⁴⁵

Newsweek magazine ran an article on 13 April 1967 which stated there was a "Credibility Gap" among the NVA and VC forces. It stated that the wide disparity between the VC and NVA figures and the U.S. figures of KIA and WIA cannot be attributed to the "fog and friction of war," but because of lack of military successes, Giap's lieutenants are "nervously fabricating silver linings to keep their own reputations bright. For Hanoi, the danger in this is that, in time, Giap's military calculations may come to be based on fiction rather than fact."⁴⁶

(Echols Collection).

⁴⁵"America's War Dead - By State, Age and Rank," U.S. News and World Report, 10 May 1967. (Indochina Collection).

⁴⁶"Credibility Gap," Newsweek, 13 March 1967. (Indochina Collection).

In an interview of NVA Colonel Tran Van Dac, who served as the commander of the "Tien Phuong" (the Front Division) in Saigon from October 1967 until he rallied to the South Vietnamese Government on 13 April 1968. Colonel Tran decided to Chieu Hoi during the Tet 1968 offensive when he realized that his leaders were not listening to his assessment of the situation within his area of responsibility in Saigon. His division had "low and unstable morale in the face of the tremendous losses. Our ammunition dumps or caches were discovered and many staging areas were spotted and destroyed." He recommended an alternate plan to higher headquarters and was told he was "too pessimistic. In spite of these realities, these obvious facts, they believed I was too pessimistic!"⁴⁷ Colonel Tran stated that the uprising in the cities was impossible because "The general uprising was falsely reported by the city penetration elements."⁴⁸ He also felt the greatest weakness of the North Vietnamese leadership was

. . . subjective assessment or judgment of the situation. That is sometimes disastrous. Their subordinates always tend to submit rosy reports to their superiors. These reports, of course, are not true to the realities; but the higher levels always want to hear good reports, which thus make them so confident of success.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Tran Van Dac, "Interviews with NVA Colonel Tran Van Dac, alias Tam Ha." Saigon: Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, Part VII, 30 May 1968, 8. (Indochina Collection).

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., 10.

Reports to Colonel Tran before the offensive indicated the Southern people would support a general uprising and the "populace was ready to join the Revolution." He discussed these reports with his headquarters before the offensive and his staff concluded a "smashing surprise offensive on Saigon would certainly send the residents of Saigon to the streets, in support of our troops. They believed the people would support them, being impressed by the accomplishments of their military forces."⁵⁰ The failure of the Tet offensive, Colonel Tran stated, was caused by an "erroneous evaluation of the people's attitude."⁵¹

Also, in the South Vietnamese countryside where the Vietcong once freely collected taxes, assassinated officials, and provided communication support, the communist leaders expected strong support for their general uprising. It seems from a careful review of documentation, political cadre who knew promotions and honors were only bestowed upon those who could claim great were strides in controlling territory and populations were lying to the North Vietnamese leadership.

In 1967 MACV statistics revealed sixty-seven percent of the population was under government control and all but

⁵⁰Ibid., Part V, 5.

⁵¹Ibid., 7.

20 of the 242 districts were secure.⁵² The National Liberation Front claimed eighty-percent of South Vietnam's territory and nearly 67 percent of the country's population was controlled by the Vietcong. A NLF program published 1 September 1966 contained this claim⁵³ and may have provided the North Vietnamese leadership with a distorted view of the social situation in South Vietnam.

Summary

Socially, the North Vietnamese had failed to politicize and win support of the population of South Vietnam. There were repeated instances of non-support for the VC, numerous Chieu Hois, and reports of leaders not wholly following the cause. But perhaps the most damaging to the North Vietnamese leadership was the lack of integrity displayed on reports flowing up to COSVN and Hanoi concerning the politicization of the people of South Vietnam. Had the political cadre honestly reported the results of the struggle for the "hearts and minds" of the people of South Vietnam, maybe Tet 1968 would have just been a holiday and not a massive military offensive.

⁵²Morrison, Elephant, 376-377.

⁵³"Viet Cong Loss of Population Control." Captured Vietcong Documents: Indochina Archives Collection, 1967. Trans unk.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

. . .sometimes in war there are important battles whose difficulties, whatever they may be, we must determine to overcome at all costs to destroy the enemy. Victories in these battles will create favorable conditions for the success of the entire campaign.¹

Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, 1970

Introduction

It seems that Tet 1968, the near catastrophic North Vietnamese military failure, was the battle about which Giap was referring to above. The offensive ended in July 1968 with sobering results for the North Vietnamese. Of the estimated 195,000 NVA and VC soldiers the Communists sent into the attacks, about 45,000 were killed by the end of February, including some of their most experienced cadre. Thus, in one month, the enemy sustained heavier losses than South Vietnamese and U.S. forces had suffered in nine years. By the end of the offensive on 1 July 1968, Giap lost (either killed in action or permanently disabled) about 85,000 men. Included in this debacle were the 60,000 reinforcements who infiltrated down the Ho Chi Minh trail

¹Vo Nguyen Giap, Banner, 91.

from the North during the offensive.² The Tet offensive was, by any standard, a military defeat of massive proportions for the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong. This general offensive was a premature transition to phase three of the dau tranh model, executed by a military leader under the orders of Ho Chi Minh and rest of the communist party leadership, who sought an early decision to a political dilemma. This chapter discusses that transition; the timing and the correctness according to the dau tranh model of revolutionary war.

Why Transition to a General Offensive?

What made the North Vietnamese feel that the time was right to transition to phase three of dau tranh during Tet 1968? Basically, the North Vietnamese had no choice but to transition from mobile warfare to a general offensive and khoi nghia during Tet 1968 due to political, military, economic, and social reasons.

Political Reasons

Politically the war was at a stalemate. The United States refused to back down from its stated position. Moreover, with the United Nations in favor of the United States position, the only way to achieve this strength was to regain the military initiative. Similarly, the Soviet

²Pike, War, Peace, 128.

Union was pushing for resolution to the war, either by peace negotiations (from a position of strength) or by military defeat of the United States and South Vietnamese forces.

Accordingly, North Vietnam could not afford to antagonize the Soviets for fear of losing monetary, food, and war materiel support from them. China was pushing for a total victory. Peace negotiations were only palatable to China if the North Vietnamese were negotiating from a position of strength. North Vietnam also could not afford to lose China's backing for economic and military support.

Transition back to phase one would be construed by outside nations as a sign of political and military weakness. This is particularly true of the Chinese, whose revolutionary model was used as a framework for dau tranh model and does not leave the "gate open" to move back from phase two to phase one. The Chinese advocated moving resolutely through the phases, *gathering strength until the general uprising could be achieved*. Had the about face occurred, the Americans could "crow they had succeeded with their attrition strategy." Thus, the North Vietnamese would not only have lost face and respect among other nations, but would have been abandoned by politicians who would not recommend economic aid for losing causes.

Military Reasons

Giap's forces could not remain in phase two.

Attrition of forces, shrinking manpower pools in South and North Vietnam, and a general lessening of support for the cause by sympathizers among the South Vietnamese people simply would not allow sustained operations in this phase. Militarily then, the choices were clear: revert to the guerrilla warfare of phase one and try to build-up strength to again transition through to victory or "go for broke" and gamble on one final push. The key to this decision to "go for broke" lies once again in the lack of support of the South Vietnamese population.

According to capture VC documents analyzed, the Allied pacification programs had worked well in the past and would continue to work well if the North Vietnamese were forced to revert back to phase one. Secure hamlets and villages would deny the VC the support base needed to build up strength. If the political decision was made to revert to phase one, it is feasible to assume that phase one would be the death of the liberation movement within South Vietnam. Granted, the guerrillas might gain the tactical initiative, thus being able to strike at the time and place of their choosing. However, if the guerrillas could not garner enough support to feed and support themselves for the duration of the protracted phase one, that initiative would die quickly. On the positive side, historically against the

Americans, every time the VC had pulled back on conventional warfare, the bombing campaign against them had slackened. If that campaign was minimized or curtailed, the North Vietnamese could use that time to develop logistics bases in the south via the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Economic Reasons

With the drying-up of the economic support by South Vietnamese populace, the VC could not support themselves without sustained, deliberate, and constant aid from North Vietnam. North Vietnam's manpower, transportation, food shortages, and shrinking industrial base could not be fixed by the government unless the U.S. government stopped their bombing, which would give the North Vietnamese time to rebuild and recoup their losses. If economic sanctions and bombing were intensified, it is doubtful that enough aid could be brought through to sustain the population of North Vietnam and the VC.

Social Reasons

The people of North Vietnam had thus far been patient with the conduct of the war and the deprivations they had been experiencing. Had the economic situation worsened however, and the population of North Vietnam suffered hunger, then uprisings could occur, against the in-place government which was not caring for its people. This

in turn would lead to less outside support and more internal turmoil. The North Vietnamese could not let this happen. The support of many South Vietnamese people was slipping away daily. The supposition was that if the uprisings in the South did not take place soon, it might be too late to hope to incite the population to support a military endeavor.

Was this transition correct using the Dau Tranh model?

This transition was incorrect according to the Dau Tranh model. As discussed above, the reasons for transitioning to phase three were all negative and none of the previously discussed trigger points (Chapter Four) could be answered in a positive manner. The key factors were:

1) Military Strength - As discussed in Chapter Four, from 1966 to 1967, by following the dau tranh strategy, Giap's forces suffered almost two years without a tactical victory on the battlefields of South Vietnam. His forces were outnumbered on the battlefield approximately 1.5 to one. His air force was outnumbered six to one. Attrition had taken its toll and Giap realized that his army could not continue to sustain such military and psychological losses. Giap did not have the advantage of military initiative or morale.

2) Social Strength - The South Vietnamese did not support the uprising, nor were they willing to support the VC on a daily basis. No evidence could be found for any support from external countries except the U.S.S.R. (and its satellites) and China. The United Nations had recently condemned the North for its refusal to enter into peace negotiations with the United States and South Vietnam. Recent elections in South Vietnam showed a growing acceptance for a democratic South Vietnam and increased stability.

3) Demoralization of the Enemy - The ARVN strength and skill were growing. The US military morale was high after two years of victory after victory. The US leaders, both political and military, were speaking about "light at the end of the tunnel." Giap wrongly anticipated or hoped that the ARVN would not fight and would disintegrate in the face of powerful North Vietnamese and Vietcong attacks. In fact, a captured enemy document stated that not only wouldn't the ARVN fight but South Vietnamese soldiers would openly join the NLF en masse.³

Also according to Pike, US communications centers, were also targeted along with command centers and response structures. Giap thought if these "brains" of the US were destroyed or rendered ineffective, then the soldiers and

³Pike War, Peace, 127.

units on the ground would be unable to execute their defense. However, the US Army's initiative and ability to operate without direct orders again proved worthy of the challenge.⁴

4) Weakened Enemy Will - In 1967, when the decision was made to transition, over 50 percent of the American people supported the President's military decisions, about the same percentage as in 1966. Over 66 percent of the people thought the United States involvement in the war was "morally right."

5) Timeliness - There were no scheduled peace talks, no dramatic sideboards for a military victory (as there was at Dien Bien Phu). The Tet holiday came in the dry season - the season when an offensive would normally be conducted. The kick-off day for the offensive was considered a surprise. However, U.S. intelligence staffs had predicted an offensive during this period. Due to the large amounts of people traveling in conjunction with the holiday, it was easier for the NVA and VC to infiltrate into the cities.

6) Correct Leadership - The Tet 1968 offensive was primarily conducted using VC forces due to the extremely intimate nature of the military and social actions that had

⁴Ibid., 128.

to take place. It only made sense that southerners (VC) conducted the attacks. Using VC would encourage the population to join in with their "brothers" instead of following a northerner. Senior General Thranh had recently died and had left a void in the VC high leadership. Ho Chi Minh was then 79 years old and of failing health. Giap's impetuous nature and willingness to take risks if a high payoff was likely (as he had in the 1950-51 French Campaign), could have had a serious impact upon this operation.

7) Uprising of the People - Probably the most serious failing of the North Vietnamese leadership was their improper analysis of the South Vietnamese people's desire to support the Vietcong after the years of repressive action by the VC. In part due to the ideological belief that the South Vietnamese loathed the Americans and in part due to enormous misinformation fed to higher communist leaders by the local political officers for whatever reason (maybe over optimism, maybe fear of the bosses' ires) concerning the South Vietnamese population's readiness to rise up and carry the torch of revolution forward to victory. They had reported a rising feeling of anti-Americanism. The real mistake made by the Vietcong was to equate anti-Americanism with pro-communism.

Conclusion

It is clear that the leaders in Hanoi were under tremendous pressure to achieve an impression-making success, however costly. The goals they sought in their Tet offensive were obvious. They hoped to deliver a massive blow that would provide them victory, either on the battlefield or at a later bargaining table. They failed to achieve either and lost massive amounts of soldiers and equipment. The Communists aimed to topple the South Vietnamese government. They failed, but in their failure came new respect for the South Vietnamese government's arm of military power. The NVA expected their offensive to produce a popular uprising. They failed to incite the people to rise up against the Americans. The offensive gave rise, instead, to new anti-communist feelings among the population of South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese attacked at Tet 1968 in desperation and unfortunately, their desperate move struck at possibly unforeseen, yet critical, objectives - President Johnson, American will, international press, etc. Public support for the war and the Johnson administration plunged after the offensive. In March, during the Tet offensive, as a direct result of that offensive and the press garnered by it, President Johnson announced he would not run for reelection. As a result of these circumstances, the NVA bargaining power rose significantly.

I contend the North Vietnamese felt the time was right to transition to a general offensive due to the multitude and magnitude of political, military, economic, and social problems that faced them in July 1967. I also conclude that decision was an incorrect one based on the six criteria that should be met in order to transition according to the Vietnamese strategy for revolutionary war, dau tranh.

APPENDIX 1

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Primary sources include Mao's On Protracted War, The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volumes I-IV, and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. Of these, the first is the best representation of the strategy used by the Vietnamese as the framework for the Vietnamese strategy for revolutionary war.

Vo Nguyen Giap was the most prolific of the strategists studied for this research paper. Of his many books, I used Big Victory, Great Task, Banner of People's War, The Military Art of People's War, National Liberation War in Viet Nam, and People's War, People's Army in this study. The last of these books best laid out his ideas on the strategy of protracted war. It also leaves little doubt that Giap was lecturing those responsible for running the war on how they should proceed. Giap and Troung Chinh advocated, that the revolution in the South had to be built from the ground up.

A collection of writings from 1920-1966 were used to understand the thinking of Ho Chi Minh. This work, edited by Bernard Fall was On Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-66. This book is based largely on the four-volume Selected Works of Ho Chi Minh published in Hanoi between 1960 and 1962. Ho's written answer to a peace proposal of President L.B. Johnson written in 1967 was very useful in analyzing the North Vietnamese state of mind during that time. A

great deal of Ho's thoughts have been preserved as transcripts of Radio Hanoi broadcasts which were examined in Visions of Victory and in the Echols and Indochina Archives collections described below.

Primer for Revolt: The Communist Takeover in Vietnam was Truong Chinh's primer for a revolution. This book solidified the Vietnamese strategy for revolutionary war. Also it was interesting to note Truong Chinh's strong affiliation with Marxist/Leninist thought in reading his speech "For the centenary of Lenin's birth," published in Hanoi in 1971. Truong Chinh and General Giap differed in their feelings about the strategy for the Second Indochina war. Truong Chinh wanted to conduct a guerrilla war conducted by the South Vietnamese, allowing the North Vietnamese to concentrate on building the infrastructure and industrial base of North Vietnam after the devastation of the First Indochina war. Giap advocated the North Vietnamese assist the South with soldiers and military materiel so that mobile and positional as well as guerrilla warfare could be conducted.

Visions of Victory, a compilation of communist Vietnamese documents and broadcasts from June 1966 to March 1968, provided insight into publicized Vietnamese military strategy. It also covered such topics as the effectiveness of American search-and-destroy missions and pacification programs, North Vietnam defenses against aerial bombardment

and the anticipated invasion by the United States ground forces, military and political "contradictions" besetting the United States and the successes and failures of the Tet offensive. Mostly authored or spoken by the military leaders of North Vietnam, including Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh and General Giap, it provided a look into the "in-fighting" that centered on Vietnamese strategy and the decision to launch the Tet offensive of 1968.

Truong Son, a Vietcong military commentator in South Vietnam, addressed the "inevitable" defeat of the United States and South Vietnam in 1967. His pamphlet The Winter 1966 - Spring 1967 Victory and Five Lessons Concerning the Conduct of Military Strategy, proved extremely useful in determining the military concerns during the decision phase for the Tet offensive.

Hanoi's Foreign Languages Publishing House, the government's printing office, released South Viet Nam: A Great Victory, Winter 1966-Spring 1967 in June 1967. It recapped the "victorious" North Vietnamese campaign. This propaganda pamphlet outlined the various United States programs ongoing in the Republic of Vietnam and the North Vietnamese reaction to each.

A Vietcong Memoir, a book written by Truong Nhu Tang, a Vietcong official of Central Office South Vietnam (COSVN), provided an insight into the workings of the COSVN operation and the feelings of the South Vietnamese communist leaders

concerning the Tet offensive operation. Truong Nhu Tang served on the COSVN staff until he was appointed to a cabinet position in the government of Hanoi, an unusual honor for Vietcong leaders, most of whom were shunted aside once Hanoi established itself in South Vietnam.

Two microfiche collections of Vietnam War documents to include North Vietnamese documents, radio broadcasts, and newspaper articles have been translated into the *Indochina Archives* and the *Echols Collection*. These two collections contained unclassified documents pertaining to all aspects of the Vietnam War.

The *Echols Collection* contained government documents concerning the war, such as internal reports, statistics, press releases, speeches, propaganda, and research reports provide information on the views of the U.S. government, its enemies (China and Russia), and allies (Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, the Philippines). Anti-war groups, left-wing organizations in the U.S. and elsewhere provided a wide variety of views and information.

"The Political Program on the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam," contained in the *Echols Collection*, recounts the results of the NLF congress meeting in August 1967. This document encouraged the Vietnamese people to press forward in the impetus of our victories to completely

defeat the US aggressors and gave an insight into the push the political arm had in the execution of the dau tranh strategy.

By far the most interesting document personally in this collection was a transcript of an interview of North Vietnamese Army defector, Colonel Tran Van Duc, alias Tam Ha. Colonel Tran defected in the fall of 1968 following the Tet offensive of 1968. His background as political officer and division commander in the NVA enabled him to speak with some authority on the Tet offensive's methods and planning.

The *Indochina Archives Collection* contained voluminous materials from all of the governments and organizations directly involved in the Vietnam War, including their military forces. All of the competing perceptions of the nature, course, and purpose of the war were represented. Because it was started by Douglas Pike, a noted army historian who's speciality is the Vietnam War, the collection was strong on materials from the "other side" of the Vietnam War, the National Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Of particular interest in this collection was a translation of a captured NLF document describing the shortage of foods in Quang Nam Province obtained by the United States Army in October 1967. This letter from the Finance and Economy Section of Quang Nam Province, addressed

to subordinate districts, sections and branches informed them that agricultural production encountered many difficulties due to prolonged flood and drought and especially because of the "enemy" (US/South Vietnam) defoliation program.

Primary sources from the United States and South Vietnamese side, included MACV historical reports. These official military reports were extremely useful in setting the stage for the Tet offensive. They also provided an in depth summary of military action in the war zone during both 1967 and 1968.

The Records of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Parts I and II were a microfiche collection of MACV documents from 1954-1973. It was extremely weak in documents dated 1968 and earlier as compared to 1970 and later. However, it contained reports, studies, briefings, captured documents, propaganda and statistics very useful to this research. Part I, "The War in Vietnam, 1954-1973" contained the documentary collection of the MACV Historical Office. "Classified Studies from the Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam (CICV), 1965-1973," Part II of this collection provided useful US and North Vietnam chronicles as translated and analyzed by the CICV's Combined Document Exploitation Center (CDEC).

The "Viet Cong Tet Offensive (1968)" Volumes I and II written by Lieutenant Colonel Pham Van Son, Chief of the

Military History Division, J5 - Joint General Staff of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces proved very useful in providing a Vietnamese overview of the Tet offensive to include some analysis of the goals and failures of the operation.

Written in the same vein, Strategy and Tactics and The General Offensives of 1968-69, by Col. Hoang Ngoc Lung, ARVN, provided excellent insight into the South Vietnamese perspective on the strategy and tactics used by both South and North Vietnamese and the Tet offensive of 1968.

Reports to the President of the United States from 1967 to 1968 compiled in The Bunker Papers helped to understand the political situation between Saigon, Washington D.C., and Hanoi leaders. Volumes I and II contained dispatches written between 1967 to 1968 sent to the President by Elsworth Bunker, American Ambassador to South Vietnam.

President Johnson's The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969 allowed examination of President Johnson's decision making process and what the administration struggled with during the Vietnam War.

The New York Times, The Christian Science Monitor, The Washington Post, and The Los Angeles Times newspapers furnished day-by-day accounts of the political, military, and social situation in the United States as well as accounts and reports broadcasted on Radio Hanoi.

Most secondary sources provided broad background knowledge of this subject. The histories utilized the most were Stanley Karnow's Vietnam: A History, Philip Davidson's Vietnam at War: The History 1946-1975, Dave Richard Palmer's Summons of the Trumpet and Andrew F. Krepinevich's The Army and Vietnam. The first two were very detailed but not well documented for verifying sometimes general statements. Palmer and Krepinevich were very military oriented and gave a good overview of the military's role in the Vietnam war.

Many RAND and military school research papers contributed details and statistical data to this inquiry. Among the better studies dealing with the Vietnamese psyche were those conducted by Konrad Kellen, Stephen Hosmer and Brian Jenkins of the RAND corporation. Douglas Pike provided the best overview of the North Vietnamese army. His PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam helped to understand the development of the People's Liberation Army, the Vietcong, and the North Vietnamese Army itself. War Comes to Long An by Jeffrey Race gave a detailed description of how the revolutionary forces of Ho Chi Minh developed their revolution within the province of Long An. This province was strategically located just south of Saigon, astride key communication routes into the highly populated and rice-rich Mekong Delta. The role of American advisors in Vietnam, as well as ambassadors and Foreign Service staffs, is best understood through the treatment of The Ugly American by

William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick. From a strictly US military perspective, Clodfelter explains how the US Air Force did not accomplish a great deal with its bombing operation Rolling Thunder. In his analysis of the impact on the welfare (nutrition) of the North Vietnamese, I found some discrepancies in Clodfelter's reasoning as verified by the Kansas State University Extension Service, Nutritional Services.

Jon Van Dyke, in North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival provided remarkable information which was very useful for the economic analysis chapter. His detailed statistics of caloric intake, food imports, labor shortages, and repair of transportation routes proved invaluable.

For a "leftist" view of the war and a study in propaganda methods used by the North Vietnamese, Wilfred Burchett was both easy to read and to laugh at in Viet North. His "insights" produced a sense of wonder at his naivete.

A critical look at the Johnson Administration is the theme of Herbert Y. Schandler's book The Unmaking of a President. Schandler pulls no punches in analyzing the decisions made concerning the US involvement in Vietnam, the pressures on the Johnson administration, considering earlier Vietnam policy as well as the subsequent effects of the President's actions. This book provided an insight into the complexity of the process of policy making.

APPENDIX 2

ACRONYMS

ALLIES	The alliance between US, South Vietnamese, and Free World Military Assistance Forces
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)
AWOL	Absent Without Leave (US)
CAP	Civil Action Program (US)
CDEC	Combined Document Exploitation Center responsible for the analysis of captured documents for Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.
CICV	Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam. Part of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, Pacific. (U.S.)
COSVN	Central Office of South Vietnam (political arm of the NVN Politburo in South Vietnam)
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone (RVN military administrative division; there were four, numbered from North to South I, II, III, and IV)
DRV or DRVN	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FWMAF	Free World Military Assistance Force
GVN	Government of Vietnam (South)
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party
LF	Local Force (VC combat unit subordinate to a district or province)
LOC	Line of Communications
MAAG	Military Assistance and Advisory Group (US)
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (US)
MEDCAP	Medical Civil Action Program (US)

MF	Main Force (VC combat unit subordinate to the COSVN, military region, or subregion)
MR	Military region (military/political administrative division)
NFLSVN	National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (Also called NLF)
NLF	National Liberation Front (see NFLSNVN)
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NVN	North Vietnam: North Vietnamese
PLA	People's Liberation Army (NVN)
PLAF	People's Liberation Army Front (NVN)
PLC	People's Liberation Committee
PRC	People's Republic of China (Communist)
PRP	People's Revolutionary Party (South Vietnamese Communist Party)
RD Program	Revolutionary Development Program (US program within the broad term of Pacification, later changed name to Rural Development Program, designed for country building)
RVN	Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)
SVN	South Vietnam: South Vietnamese
SVNLA	South Vietnamese Liberation Army (Communist)
Tet	Sacred Vietnamese Holiday akin to New Year. Very family oriented holiday usually celebrated in February.
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
VC	Vietcong (Vietnamese Communist)
Vietminh	Vietnamese Doc Lap Dong Minh communist front

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

[Communist documents are annotated with an *.]

Addington, Larry H. The Patterns of War Since the Eighteenth Century. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Austin, Anthony. The President's War: The Story of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and How the Nation was Trapped in Vietnam. New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1971.

Bergerud, Eric M. The Dynamics of Defeat: The Vietnam War in Hau Nghia Province. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1991.

Berman, Larry. Lyndon Johnson's War: The Road to Stalemate in Vietnam. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989.

Boettiger, John R. Vietnam and American Foreign Policy. Lexington, Mass: D. C. Heath and Company, 1972.

Bui Diem. In the Jaws of History. Boston: Houghton Mufflin Co, 1990.

Burchett, Wilfred G. Vietnam North. New York: International Publishers, 1966.

Cameron, Allan W. Viet-Nam Crisis: A documentary History, Volume 1, 1940-1956. New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 7.

Chalton, Michael and Anthony Moncrieff. Many Reasons Why: The American Involvement in Vietnam. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.

Ch'ing Yeh (Jen Tso-hsuan). Inside Mao Tse-Tung Thought: An Analytical Blueprint of His Actions. Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1975.

- Clodfelter, Mark. The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam. New York: Macmillian, 1989.
- Cohen, Steven. Vietnam: Anthology and Guide to a Television History. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983.
- Davidson, Phillip B. Secrets of the Vietnam War. Novato, Calif: Presidio Press, 1990.
- _____. Vietnam at War: The History 1946-1975. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Dougan, Clark., Samuel Lipsman and the Editors of Boston Publishing Company. A Nation Divided: The War at Home, 1945-1972. Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1984.
- Fall, Bernard B. Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu. New York: Random House, 1968.
- _____. Last Reflections on a War. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967.
- _____. Street Without Joy. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Company, 1961.
- _____. The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis. 2nd ed. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1971.
- _____. The Viet-Nam Witness: 1953-66. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966.
- Gibbons, William Conrad. The U.S. Government and The Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part I: 1945-1960. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Gold, Gerald, Allan M. Siegal and Samuel Abt, Editors. The Pentagon Papers. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971.
- Henderson, William Darryl. Why the Vietcong Fought: A Study of Motivation and Control in a Modern Army in Combat. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1979.
- Higgins, Marguerite. Our Vietnam Nightmare. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965.

- *Ho Chi Minh. On Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-66.
ed. Bernard B. Fall. New York: Frederick A.
Praeger, 1967.
- Johnson, Lyndon Baines. The Vantage Point: Perspectives of
the Presidency, 1963-1969. New York: Holt, Rinehart
and Winston, 1971.
- Karnow, Stanley. Vietnam: A History. New York: Penguin
Books, 1984.
- Krepinevich, Andrew F. Jr. The Army and Vietnam. Baltimore:
The John Hopkins University Press, 1986.
- Latimer, Thomas Kennedy. Hanoi's Leaders and their South
Vietnam Policies: 1954-1968. Ph.D. dissertation.
Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 1972.
- Lederer, William J. and Eugene Burdick. The Ugly American.
New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1958.
- Lomperis, Timothy J. The War Everyone Lost - and Won:
America's Intervention in Viet Nam's Twin Struggles.
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987.
- *Mao Tse-Tung. On Protracted War. Translator unknown.
Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967.
- *_____. Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung.
Translator unknown. Peking: Foreign Languages
Press, 1967.
- *_____. Selected Works. Vol I (1937-1938), Vol 2
(1937-1938) & V (1945-1949). Translator unknown.
New York: International Publishers, 1966.
- Marr, David G. Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945.
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- Matthews, Lloyd J. & Dale E. Brown, eds. Assessing the
Vietnam War. Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's
International Defense Publishers, 1987.
- McGarvey, Patrick J. ed. Visions of Victory: Selected
Vietnamese Communist Military Writings, 1964-1968.
Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and
Peace, 1969.
- Milstein, Jeffrey S. Dynamics of the Vietnam War. Columbus:
Ohio State University Press, 1974.

- Momyer, Gen William M. Air Powers in Three Wars (WWII, Korea, Vietnam). Privately Published. Undated.
- Morrison, Wilbur H. The Elephant and the Tiger: The Full Story of the Vietnam War. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990.
- *N. Khac Huyen. Vision Accomplished? The Enigma of Ho Chi Minh. New York: Macmillian Company, 1971.
- Oberdorfer, Don. TET. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1971.
- Olson, James S. ed., Dictionary of the Vietnam War. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.
- Palmer, Dave Richard. Summons of the Trumpet: US-Vietnam in Perspective. Novato, Calif: Presidio Press, 1978.
- Palmer, Bruce Jr. The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1984.
- Parker, F. Charles IV. Vietnam: Strategy for a Stalemate. New York: Paragon House, 1989.
- Pike, Douglas E. PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam. Novato, Calif: Presidio Press, 1986.
- _____. ed. The Bunker Papers: Reports to the President from Vietnam, 1967-1973. Vols I and II. Berkeley: University of California at Berkely, 1990.
- _____. The Vietnam War: View from the Other Side. Saigon: US Information Service, December 1967.
- _____. War, Peace, and the Viet Cong. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969.
- Poole, Peter A. Eight Presidents and Indochina. Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1978.
- Race, Jeffrey. War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.
- Schandler, Herbert Y. The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

- Schlight, John. ed. The Second Indochina War: Proceedings of a Symposium Held at Airlie, Virginia, 7-9 November 1984. Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1986.
- Serong, F. P. The Future of South Vietnam. New York: National Strategy Information Center, Inc., 1971.
- Sharp, U.S.G. and W.C. Westmoreland. Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968) Sections 1 & 2. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1968.
- Sivaram, M. The Vietnam War: Why? Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Publishers, 1966.
- Smith, R.B. An International History of The Vietnam War: Volume I-III. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.
- Sobel, Lester A. and Hal Kosut, eds. South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia, Vols 1-3. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1973.
- *South Viet Nam: A Great Victory Winter 1966-Spring 1967. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1967.
- Sun Tzu. The Art of War. Translated by Samuel B. Griffith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Sylvester, John F. The Eagle and the Dragon. Philadelphia: Darrance & Co., Inc., 1965.
- *Truong Chinh. Primer for Revolt: The Communist Takeover in Vietnam. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963.
- *Truong Nhu Tang. A Vietcong Memoir. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1985.
- *Truong Son. The Winter 1966-Spring 1967 Victory and Five Lessons Concerning the Conduct of Military Strategy. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1967.
- Turley, William S. The Second Indochina War: A Short Political, and Military History, 1954-1975. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1986.
- Van Dyke, Jon M. North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival. Palo Alto, California: Pacific Books, 1972.
- *Van Tien Dung. South Vietnam: U.S. Defeat Inevitable. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1967.

- *Vo Nguyen Giap. Banner of People's War, The Party's Military Line. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1970.
- *_____. Big Victory, Great Task: North Viet-Nam's Minister of Defense Assesses the Course of the War. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968.
- *_____. National Liberation War in Viet Nam: General Line-Strategy-Tactics. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971. (Echols Collection)
- *_____. People's War, People's Army. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969.
- *_____. The Military Art of People's War. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970.
- Warner, Denis. The Last Confucian. New York: Macmillian Company, 1963.
- Westmoreland, William C. A Soldier Reports. 2nd Ed. New York: Dell Publishing, 1981.
- Zagoria, Donald S. Vietnam Triangle: Moscow, Peking, Hanoi. New York: Pegasus, 1987.

PERIODICALS AND ARTICLES

[Communist documents are annotated with an *.]

- "Allied Drivers Seek to Open Coast Roads." The Washington Post. 4 April 1967 (Echols Collection)
- "America's War Dead - By State, Age and Rank." U.S. News & World Report. 10 May 1967 (Indochina Collection)
- "The Budget Dollar." The Washington Post. 25 January 1967. p. A9.
- "The Changing Federal Budget." The Washington Post. 25 January 1967. p. A1.
- *"China's Pledge to Vietcong." China Military Press. (Peking), 15 February 1967. (Echols Collection)
- "CNP Home from Hanoi." Communique for New Politics. (Berkeley) 30 March 1967. (Echols Collection)

- "Credibility Giap." Newsweek. 13 March 1967. (Indochina Collection)
- "Enemy Firepower Said to Increase." The New York Times. 29 January 1968, p. 4.
- "Giap Remembers." The New York Times, 24 June 1990, p. 22 - 60.
- "Hanoi-Haiphong bombing ignites worldwide debate." The Christian Science Monitor. 30 June 1966.
- *"Heavier Defeats For The U.S." The Vietnam Courier. (Berkeley) 26 June 1967. (Echols Collection)
- "Is North Vietnam Weakening?" U.S. News and World Report. Vol LXI, No. 24, 12 December 1966, Washington D.C.
- Kansas State University "Noonlighting." Manhattan, Kansas: Cooperative Extension Service, 1991.
- "King Urges Cease-Fire And End of Bombing, Denounces U.S. Role." The Washington Post. 5 April 1967. A1.
- *"Lin Piao Receives Message of Greetings from Military Council Head of South Vietnamese National Front for Liberation on Successful Exploding of China's First Hydrogen Bomb." Peking NCNA International Service. 20 June 1967. (Echols Collection)
- *"NFLSV [National Federation for the Liberation of South Vietnam] Envoy in Moscow Gives TASS Interview." PRAVDA. 15 March 1967. (Echols Collection)
- *"NFLSV Leader Thanks USSR for Program Support." Hanoi Radio. 9 November 1967. (Echols Collection)
- *"NFLSV Releases Figures on Enemy Losses." Paris AFP. 15 September 1967. (Echols Collection)
- *Nguyen Van Tien. "The South Vietnamese Liberated Zones and the Struggle against the US for National Salvation." Hoc Tap. (Hanoi), No. 7, July 1967, 42-48. Translator unknown. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- "Peking Gives Recognition to NLF's New Gov't." The New York Times. 16 June 1967. p. 1.
- "Peking: Viet Cong Must Talk for South." Japan Times. (Tokyo), 28 February 1966. (Echols Collection)

- "Political Program of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam." Communist Party of Australia. Mid-August 1967, 5.
- *"President Ho Chi Minh Answers President L.B. Johnson." Hanoi Foreign Language Publishing House, 1967, p.11.
- *"President Ho Chi Minh's Message to the American People." Vietnam Courier. (Hanoi), 2 January 1967. (Echols Collection)
- "Searching for the Real 'Uncle Ho'; an American visitor Probes Enigma of Vietnam War by Examining Leader's Legacy." Christian Science Monitor, 23 September 1991, p. 14.
- Simpson, Howard R. "A Conversation with Gen. Giap." Army Magazine, September 1991, pp 46 - 53.
- *"South Vietnam National Liberation Front President Acclaims Successful Explosion of China's First Hydrogen Bomb." Peking NCNA International Service. 20 June 1967. (Echols Collection)
- *"South-Vietnam People's Delegation Welcomed in Kwangchow." Peking NCNA International Service. 3 January 1967. (Echols Collection)
- *"South Vietnam NFL Representation in Soviet Union Gives Reception." Vietnamese News Agency. (Hanoi) 27 June 1967. (Echols Collection)
- "Truong Chinh Dies in Hanoi at 80; Was in Ho Chi Minh's Inner Circle." The New York Times, 2 October 1988, sec. 1, p. 21.
- "U.S. Stand on Vietnam Supported by Lebanon." Los Angeles Times. 13 October 1966.
- "VC Aide Acknowledges Moscow Sends Help." Washington Post. 30 October 1967.
- "Viet Cong leader recalls blitz that changed the war." Christian Science Monitor, 29 January 1988, p. 1.
- "Vietnam Through Foreign Eyes: The World Press Appraises Vietnam's National Elections under the New Constitution." Saigon, 1967, 1-2. Echols Collection.
- "Vietnam War in Perspective." U.S. News & World Report. 20 November 1967.

"What 2 1/2 Years of Bombing has Done to North Vietnam."
U.S. News and World Report, 11 September 1967, p 34.
(Indochina Archives Collection)

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

[Communist sources are annotated with an *.]

Barton, Terry L. "Generals Westmoreland and Giap: Two Great Commanders?" Thesis, United States Air Command and Staff College, Not dated.

BDM Corporation. "A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam. Vol VI, Conduct of the War. Book I, Operational Analysis and Book II, Functional Analysis." Contract Study, BDM Corporation, 1980.

* Chau Thanh District Supply Council. "Minutes of the Irregular Conference of Chau Thanh District Supply Council held by the Standing Committee." Binh Duong Province, 7 January 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)

*4 Cong Van Section "How to Build and Maintain Official Organizations in the City." SVN Propagand Training Sections, Training Subsection. 26 June 1967. (Echols Collection)

*Coordination and Operations Committee 1. "Step up the Tempo of Political Attacks during the coming enemy elections." Letter: 26 August 1967. Trans unk. Captured 4 September 1967 by 199th US Light Infantry Bde, in Gia Binh Province during Operations FAIRFAX. (Indochina Archives Collection)

*COSVN. "Report on Activities, Programs, Direction and Outlook of Propaganda and Foreign Affairs Efforts." Subcommittee for Foreign Activities. 15 June 1967. Translator Unknown.

*"Counter Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) in the Armed Forces." Political Officer of the MR I Party Committee. 15 February 1967. Trans unk. (Indochina Archives Collection)

*District Security Section of Western Nambo. "Directive on Maintenance of Internal Security by Villages in Liberated (VC) and "Weak" Areas (GVN)." Captured VC document. Combined Documents Exploitation Center, MACV. 28 August 1967 (Indochina Archives Collection)

- *Dung. "Requirements." Handwritten note dated 10 June 1966 from Dung of Ben Co District, Binh Duong Province, South Vietnam, to Bay Tuyen. 9 July 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- Eye, Douglas M. "The Generalship of Giap - The Myths and the Realities." Monograph, US Army War College, 1973.
- Farmer, James. "Counterinsurgency: Principles and Practices in Viet-Nam." Contract Study, Santa Monica, Calif: Rand Corporation, 1964.
- French Supreme Command, Far East. "Lessons From the Indo-China War, Volumes II and III." Headquarters, Supreme Command, Far East. 31 May 1955. (Translated from French. Translator unknown.)
- Fulmer, Lemos L. Jr. "Vietnam: How Did We Get There? Where Do We Go From Here?" Study Project, US Army War College, 1983.
- Garver, John W. "The Chinese Threat in the Vietnam War." Article, Parameters, US Army War College Quarterly, Spring 1992.
- Goulding, Vincent J. Jr. "War Since 1945 Seminar: Dien Bien Phu." Study Project, US Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1 April 1985.
- *H5. "Directive #11/AN Addressed to various Village Security Sections." (Captured VC document) Captured Document Exploitation Center, USMACV, 11 September 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- Hoang Ngoc Lung. "The General Offensives of 1968-69." Indochina Monographs, US Army Center of Military History, 1978.
- _____. "Strategy and Tactics." Indochina Monographs, US Army Center of Military History, 1980.
- Hosmer, Stephen T. "Viet Cong Repression and Its Implications for the Future." Contract Study, Rand Corporation, 1970.
- *Huynh Cu "Defector Tells of Low Morale, Hunger Among Viet Cong." Message, 8 August 1967. Saigon: U.S. Information Service. (Echols Collection)

- *Huynh Thi Tan. "Viet Cong Heroine Tells Why She Came Home."
Saigon: 11 May 1967. (Echols Collection)
- Jenkins, Brian M. "Giap and the Seventh Son." Contract
Study, Rand Corporation, 1972.
- _____. "Why the North Vietnamese will Keep Fighting."
Contract Study, Rand Corporation. Not Dated.
- Keaveney, Michael W. "Unravelling the Giap Myth."
Individual Essay, US Army War College, 1984.
- Kellen, Konrad. "1971 and Beyond: The View from Hanoi."
Contract Study, Rand Corporation, 1971.
- Kenney, J.F.C. Jr. "Counterinsurgency: One Approach to
Doctrine." Thesis, US Army Command and General
Staff College, 1964
- Levanger, John C. "General Vo Nguyen Giap: The Vietnamese
Napoleon?" Research Paper, US Army War College,
1973.
- *Military Region III "Notes on Party Leadership." Trans
unk. Captured 23 October 1967 in South Vietnam by
21st Infantry Division, RVNAF IV CTZ. (Indochina
Archives Collection)
- Parker, F. Charles. "Vietnam and the Soviet Asian
Strategy." Student Research Report, US Army
Institute for Advanced Russian and East European
Studies, 1977.
- Parker, Captain William D. "U.S. Marine Corps Civil Affairs
in I Corps, Republic of South Vietnam: April 1966 to
April 1967." Washington D.C.: Historical Division,
HQs, U.S. Marine Corps, 1970.
- Pham Van Son. "The Viet Cong "Tet" Offensive (1968) Vols
I & II." Trans J5/JG5 Translation Board. Saigon:
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Printing and
Publications Center, 1969.
- _____. "TET 1968: The Communist Offensive That Marked
the Beginning of America's Defeat in Vietnam Vol
II." Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1980.
- Pohle, Victoria. "The Viet Cong in Saigon: Tactics and
Objectives During the Tet Offensive." Contract
Study, Rand Corporation, 1969.

- *"Political Re-orientation for 1967." South Vietnamese Liberation Army, Political Staff Department. 20 January 1967. Trans unk. (Echols Collection)
- Purcell, Roger L. "A Description and Analysis of the Sieges of Dien Bien Phu and Khe Sanh." Research Paper, US Air War College, 1986.
- *Quang Nam Province, Finance and Economy Section, South Vietnam Front for National Liberation. "Organization of an Anti-American Day to Save the People from Starvation." 7 October 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- *"Review of Rear Services Support Group captured documents." CDEC. 1967. Indochina Archives Collection. Trans unk. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- Rosello, Victor M., Jr. "The Significance of Organizational Flexibility in Communist Revolutionary Warfare Doctrine and Practice." Monograph, US Command and General Staff College, 1989.
- Ryan, Michael D. "Operational Art in Modern Revolutionary Warfare: Vo Nguyen Giap and the French Indochina War (1947-1954)." Research Report, US National War College, 1986.
- Staudenmaier, William O. "Vietnam: Mao vs Clausewitz." Research Paper, US Army War College, 1977.
- *Tien Dinh Tran. "The Two Vietnams -- As Seen by a Soldier from the North." Interrogation of Sergeant Tien, U.S. Information Agency, Saigon, June 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- *Tran Hong Phuoc. "Organization of COSVN Civil Health Services." Interrogation of Dr. Tran, 25 August 1968, Saigon Vietnam. Dr. Tran rallied to the Government of South Vietnam on 5 May 1968. Trans unknown. (Echols Collection)
- * Tran Van Dac. "Interview with NVA Colonel Tran Van Dac, alias Tam Ha." Saigon: US Joint United States Public Affairs Office, 1968. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- *Truong Cong Tu. "PW Interrogation: VC/NVA Use of Canned Rations." Interrogation of Senior SGT Truong. Captured 12 September 1970 in Kampong Cham Province, Cambodia by 333rd ARVN Tank Battle Group. Trans unk. (Indochina Archives Collection)

- US Air Force and Army Field Manual. "Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict" Washington, DC: Department of the Army and the Air Force, 1990.
- US Army Command and General Staff College. "C-5000, Operations in Low Intensity Conflict." Fort Leavenworth Kansas, January 1992.
- US Army Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam. "ARC LIGHT Effectiveness (18 June 1966 to 31 October 1967)." Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, 16 March 1968. (Reel 26, MACV History Collection, Part II)
- _____. "Effects of Pacification as Perceived by the VC." Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, 3 November 1967. (Reel 25, MACV History Collection, Part II)
- _____. "Hoi Chanh Nguyen Minh Nghia, 25, Hanoi, Long An on Situation in Long an September 1967." Headquarters. USMACV, J-2, July 1967. (Echols Collection)
- _____. "Medical Causes of Non-Effectiveness among VC/NVA Troops (Second Update)." Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, 17 November 1967. (Reel 25, MACV History Collection, Part II)
- _____. "Rice in Vietnam: Provinces of I CTZ." Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, 13 July 1968. (Reel 26, MACV History Collection, Part II)
- _____. "VC In-Country Recruitment." Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, 15 September 1967. (Reel 25, MACV History Collection, Part II)
- _____. "VC/NVA Morale." Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, 14 November 1967. (Reel 25, MACV History Collection, Part II)
- _____. "Viet Cong Loss of Population." 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection). Translator unknown.
- _____. "Vietnam Communist Casualty Claims." Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, July 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- US Army Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Headquarters. "Command History 1967." Vol I and III. Saigon: 1967.

- _____. "Enemy Documents, Bulletin No. 8239." Saigon: 1 December 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- _____. "General Westmoreland's Background Sessions." Saigon: 1967. (MACVOI Reel 6).
- _____. "Rice in Vietnam: Provinces of I CTZ." Saigon: 13 July 1968.
- _____. "Senior Officer Debriefing Report (BCS-CSFOR-74)." Debriefing Report, I Field Forces Vietnam, 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- _____. "Senior Officer Debriefing Report." Debriefing Report, IV Corps, August 1965-January 1968.
- _____. "Statistics on the War in Vietnam." Saigon: November 1967.
- _____. "Summary of Background Briefing by MACV Provost Marshal and Embassy Political Section Representative." Headquarters, MACV, Saigon: 30 June 1967. (Indochina Archives Collection)
- US Army Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Office of Information. "Revolutionary Development: Plan for a New Vietnam." Saigon: February 1967. (Reel 8, MACV Collection, Part 1)
- _____. "1967 Wrap-Up: A Year of Progress." Saigon: 1968. (Reel 6, MACV Collection, Part 1)
- _____. "1968 Summary." Saigon: 1 March 1969. (Reel 6, MACV Collection, Part 1)
- US Department of Defense. "Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1966." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967.
- US Department of Defense. "Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1967." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969.
- US Department of State. "Aggression From the North: The Record of North Viet-Nam's Campaign to Conquer South Viet-Nam." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965.
- _____. "Contributions of Free World Nations to South Vietnam." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967.

_____. "East Asian and Pacific Series, 155." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1967.

_____. "A Threat to Peace: North Vietnam's Effort to Conquer South Viet-Nam, Parts I & II." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961.

US Embassy Saigon. "A Study - Viet Cong Use of Terror." Supplement 2, Saigon: November 1967. (Echols Collection)

_____. "Viet Cong Foreign Affairs and Propaganda Activities." Saigon: 4 April 1967. (Echols Collection)

_____. "Weekly Box on Vietnam (100)." Saigon: 15 July 1967. (Echols Collection)

US House of Representatives. "Foreign Service Buildings Programs, Observations on Vietnam, and 11th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. 25 January 1966.

US Information Agency. "How the Viet Cong Get Their Money." Saigon: USIA, No 67-SM-10, February 1967, Echols Collection.

US Joint Public Affairs Office. "Viet Cong Cadre Vulnerabilities." Saigon: 30 June 1967. Indochina Archives Collection)

US Library of Congress. "The Contributions of Free World Countries to South Vietnam." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Not Dated.

_____. "Exports to South Vietnam." Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Not Dated. (History of the Vietnam War on Microfilm)

US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam. (4th Revised Edition). Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1968.

US Senate Republican Policy Committee. The Text of the Controversial Republican White Paper: The War in Vietnam. Washington, DC: Public Affair Press. 1967

*Vu Nhat "Directive #30/CT Dated 24 October 1967 Current
Affairs Committee." (Captured Vietcong Document)
Headquarters, USMACV, J-2, 24 November 1967.
(Indochina Archives Collection)

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Colonel V. Paul Baerman
Combined Arms Center (CAC-CD)
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900
2. Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Bodenner
USACGSC-CAS3
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900
3. Combined Arms Research Library
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900
4. Defense Technical Information Center
Cameron Station
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
5. Colonel Robert W. Duffner
7608 Picard NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110
6. Major Gregory Eckert
PO Box 41027
Bethesda, Maryland 20824
7. Lieutenant Colonel Harold Genet
USACGSC-CTAC
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900
8. Lieutenant Colonel Klimow
USACGSC-CSI
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900